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ISSUE NO 237
THE FOURTH PLACE

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**FIRST
PS4
REVIEW**
ASSASSIN'S
CREED IV:
BLACK FLAG



PS4

LAUNCH SPECIAL

**PAGES
OF PS4
EXCLUSIVE
CONTENT**

**"AN OPPORTUNITY
TO FALL IN LOVE
ALL OVER AGAIN"**

The Thief team discusses
its sneaky reboot

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OCTODAD
DESTINY
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DAY Z

WHAT IS THE CLOUD?

Experts explain the game-
changing tech of PS4

DESTINY

The Halo team's stun-
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WBGPLAYA1

PS4 PS3 PSVita PSN Welcome **PLAY**

The UK's only independent PlayStation magazine

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PS4

Everything you need to get started with your new console

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THIEF PLAYTESTED

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AN INDIE PARADISE

66 FIRST PS4 REVIEW:
ASSASSIN'S CREED IV

ARE YOU READY?



WELL, ARE YOU? Oh, sorry. I was referring to the question above, not just doing a spontaneous Yoda impression. So, are you ready? Are you ready for the most powerful console in the world? Because I sure as hell am not.

My pile of shame is getting out of control, now extending into the stratosphere and making a play for the title of 'world's tallest man-made structure'. It's not just the also-rans that I quite fancy playing, either – this is a tower that contains some glaring gaps in my first-hand gaming knowledge. To my aforementioned

shame, I've still yet to finish *The Last Of Us* or *BioShock Infinite*. And worse still, I haven't even opened *Beyond* (a game so emotionally charged that I'm sure I saw it shed a little tear last time I fired up *FFXIV* rather than making a dent in *The Pile*), *Batman* or *Assassin's Creed IV*, though that last one is mostly Ubisoft's fault for giving me the fear with the awful *ACIII*. In any case, I'm holding out for the PS4 version.

Aside from that, though, I suppose maybe I *am* kind of ready. Just got set up with fibre broadband so my download speeds have gone through the roof, plus there's already a cosy little space under my TV ready for

a shiny new black box to slide into. And there's no rush on the backlog anyway. I've been to a Harvester (read: console launch) before and I know that after the initial explosion of tech, games and excitement, there's a lull that lasts a good few months before the next wave of games begins. And that's when I'll strike. And by 'strike', I mean sail the 1080p high seas and shoot Helghast in the face for months on end. Yeah... I'm never finishing *BioShock Infinite*.

In other news, you hold in your hands the debut of next-gen **Play** – enjoy the new-look issue and as always, feel free to drop us a line to let us know what you think.

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LUKE ALBIGÉS
DEPUTY EDITOR
@LukemonMGJ

CURRENTLY PLAYING
Final Fantasy XIV:
A Realm Reborn

PLAY⁴ Contents

The next generation starts right here, right now

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imagineshop.co.uk



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Get ready for release with the biggest and best console guide going

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The first PS4 review is in!



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One lucky reader gets a PS4 on us

PLAY4+ PLUS

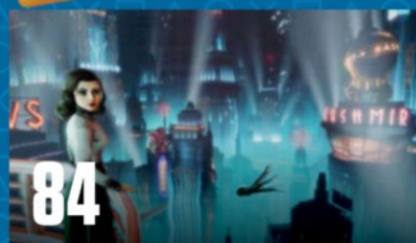
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and save 30%
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PS4

PREPARE YOURSELF 4 LAUNCH

With the release of **PlayStation 4** now just days away, we just wanted to make sure you had everything ready for the biggest console launch in years. So here it is – our guide to what the hardware does, what you'll need to get the most out of it and... well, pretty much everything else you could possibly need to hit the ground running just as soon as **PlayStation 4** hits. It's a big deal. Let's do this properly, yeah?



△○×□ Ladies and gentlemen, the PlayStation 4 – your gateway to a whole new generation of great gaming.



“LEARN THE LAYOUT
NOW AND YOU’LL
BE ABLE TO HOOK THE
THING UP BLINDFOLDED ON
THE DAY IF NEEDS BE”

BUNDLES

SOLUS PACK

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PlayStation 4 console
DualShock 4 controller
Wired mono headset
‘Figure 8’ power cable
HDMI cable
USB-to-mini-USB cable



KILLZONE MEGA PACK

£439 (GB) \$499 (US)
€499 (EU) N/A (JPN)

PlayStation 4 console
Two DualShock 4 controllers
PlayStation 4 Camera
Boxed copy of *Killzone: Shadow Fall*
Wired mono headset
‘Figure 8’ power cable
HDMI cable
USB-to-mini-USB cable



ON THE FRONT

The light, slots, buttons and features that live on the PS4's face

Sony has gone for an extremely clean, minimal look with the PS4 and unless you look pretty hard, you might not ever realise there was anything useful on the front at all. But there are a few bits you might want to know about in advance, from the recessed power button to the slot-loading disc tray, so here's a quick breakdown of its frontal features.

POWER TRIP

■ We're not entirely sure why the PlayStation 4 even needs a power button – it's not like we plan on turning the thing off any time in the near future. Still, sticking it in the energy-saving Standby mode will allow it to download updates and stay online even while it's 'off', while putting it to sleep rather than shutting it down will also allow for an almost instant reboot when you want to start playing again. As on Vita, you can even put the console to sleep with a game in progress and it'll resume exactly where you left off as soon as you want to go back to it. Clever stuff.

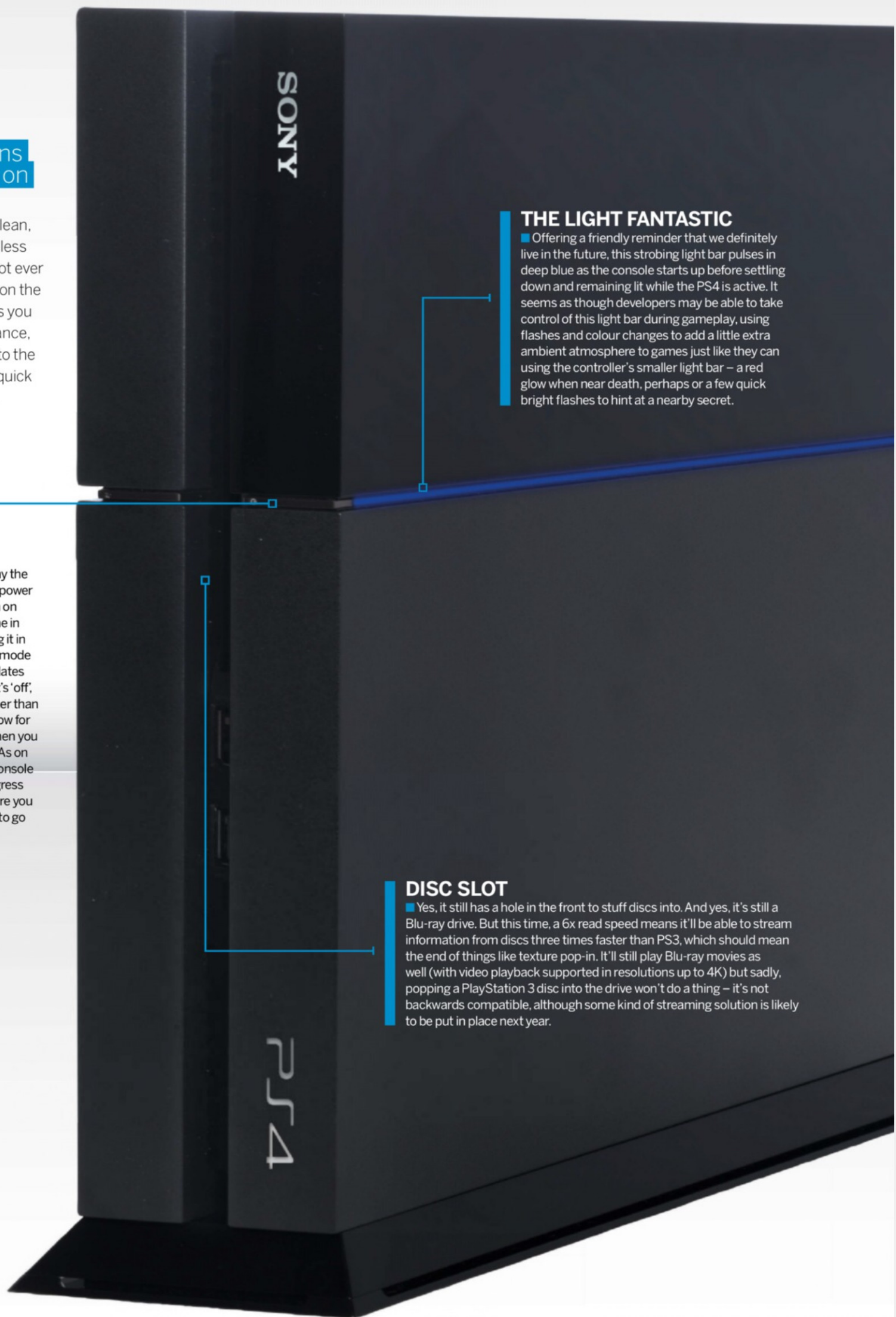
THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

■ Offering a friendly reminder that we definitely live in the future, this strobing light bar pulses in deep blue as the console starts up before settling down and remaining lit while the PS4 is active. It seems as though developers may be able to take control of this light bar during gameplay, using flashes and colour changes to add a little extra ambient atmosphere to games just like they can using the controller's smaller light bar – a red glow when near death, perhaps or a few quick bright flashes to hint at a nearby secret.

DISC SLOT

■ Yes, it still has a hole in the front to stuff discs into. And yes, it's still a Blu-ray drive. But this time, a 6x read speed means it'll be able to stream information from discs three times faster than PS3, which should mean the end of things like texture pop-in. It'll still play Blu-ray movies as well (with video playback supported in resolutions up to 4K) but sadly, popping a PlayStation 3 disc into the drive won't do a thing – it's not backwards compatible, although some kind of streaming solution is likely to be put in place next year.

“A FRIENDLY REMINDER THAT WE DEFINITELY LIVE IN THE FUTURE”





ON THE BACK

Ports: some familiar, some new and exciting, all useful...

Once all your cables are plugged in and you're up-and-running, chances are you'll never need to look at the PS4's heavily-vented rear ever again. But learn the layout now and you'll be able to hook the thing up blindfolded on the day (however much use that would actually

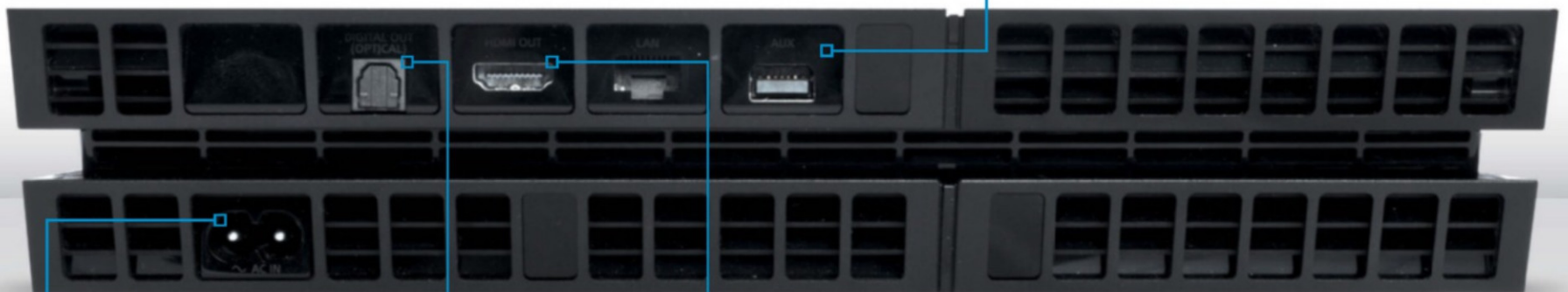
be), meaning you can start gaming even quicker. It's mostly familiar stuff on the back – there are no secrets or surprises to be found at all, in fact – but then that's pretty much exactly what we want to see. Plug it in, hook it up and let's start playing already...

"A MORE ADVANCED FORM OF HDMI OFFERS SUPPORT FOR 4K VIDEO OUTPUT WITH SUPPORTED CABLES"



LIGHTS, CAMERA...

■ You won't need to worry about wasting valuable USB ports to plug in the PlayStation 4 Camera – it now has its own proprietary port on the back of the console. This means it can be connected and powered discretely while keeping the slots free for charging cables or additional storage, plus it'll actually allow the camera to communicate with the console slightly faster as well, making for more accurate motion control and player feedback.



PLUG IN BABY

■ Just like the PlayStation 3, there's no need for an external power supply with PS4 – the PSU is inside, so you just need the provided 'figure 8' power cord. While some have pointed at similarities to the PlayStation 3 Slim in this regard and suggested that the PS4 might end up running quite hot, it has been kitted out with a far better cooling system in an attempt to keep all that awesome tech from overheating.



SOUND ADVICE

■ The optical audio connector returns on PlayStation 4, meaning anyone with a surround system will be ready to enjoy the next generation in glorious 7.1 DTS surround sound. With more powerful hardware offering enhanced realism and immersion in games, we do highly recommend that everyone try to make use of this port – hearing enemies coming from behind you or a chopper sweep overhead is just incredible and really adds a whole new level to gameplay.



4K READY

■ Look everyone – it's an HDMI port! Exciting, right? No, we know. But we're not just randomly pointing out every last hole on the back of the console here – this sole video output port is interesting for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it's only HDMI that is supported and the proprietary connection for composite/component/SCART is gone. But the upgrade comes with good reason – a more advanced form of HDMI offers support for 4K video output with supported cables. Which means if and when this super-resolution becomes the standard for new TVs, your PS4 will be ready.



SHARING IS CARING

■ The Share function is perhaps the most important feature of the entire PlayStation 4 console, and it all starts with this little button right here. By default, holding this down will take a quick snapshot while tapping takes you to a menu where you can choose to shoot, share or stream at will. You can even edit your footage and add voiceover and after-effects in order to get more people looking at the cool, game-based stuff you're producing.

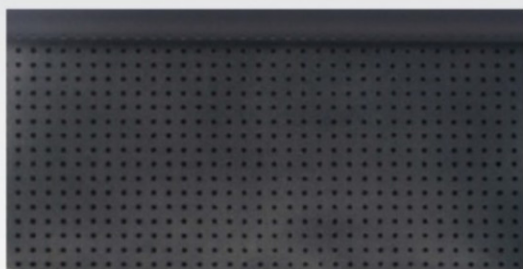


THE DUALSHOCK 4

The cool new features of the redesigned PlayStation 4 controller

Not a generation goes by without a few extra tweaks to the trusty DualShock controller, but this redesign is perhaps the most drastic yet. Sixaxis support remains intact, joined by a number of new features designed to further enhance the motion control

potential of the controller. There's even a nod to Vita in the newly added touchpad (which is already being put to great use by some of the launch titles) and while older DualShock controllers won't work on PS4, that's no surprise given all of the controller's new features.



FEELING THE PRESSURE

■ In keeping with Vita's multiple touchpads, the DualShock 4 features a central multitouch pad which can be used either to simulate additional buttons or in more inventive ways, depending on what (if anything) developers choose to do with it. Common functions will be things like quickly swapping between weapons or gadgets, although there's clearly scope for creative types to get really clever with this...



LIGHT IT UP

■ That light bar on the controller isn't just for show, you know. While the controller alone has motion control capabilities (similar to the Sixaxis tech in the DualShock 3), the PlayStation 4 Camera is able to use the light on the controller to more accurately position it in 3D space to make motion control games both possible with the standard controller alone and that much more accurate. This cool new functionality is best shown off by bundled tech demo, The Playroom.



FALSE START

■ Yes, it's a sad day because the Start and Select buttons have finally been retired after nearly 20 years of service. Replacing them are the aforementioned Share button and a new catch-all key called Options, which is likely to be a quick and easy way of getting into a game's settings or menus.



THE EXTRAS

Accessories to help make your next-gen adventure more enjoyable



DUALSHOCK 4 CHARGING STATION

£24.99 / \$24.99

■ Fed up with your controller dying while you're trying to enjoy a game? Then this is the gizmo for you. Leave your DualShock 4 (plus a second one, if you have one) in the handy charging cradle and it should be fully juiced when you come to play, meaning no more need for dangling charge cables or any of that noise.

PLAYSTATION CAMERA

£54.99 / \$59.99

■ If you want to enjoy all the same motion control and voice recognition features that Xbox One owners will get out of the box courtesy of Kinect, this is the accessory for you. It operates at a much higher resolution than the PS3's camera, meaning improved accuracy with Move and DualShock 4 motion control as well as the option for controller-free gaming. Assuming, of course, that the tidal wave of dreadful Kinect games over the last few years hasn't put developers off that concept forever.

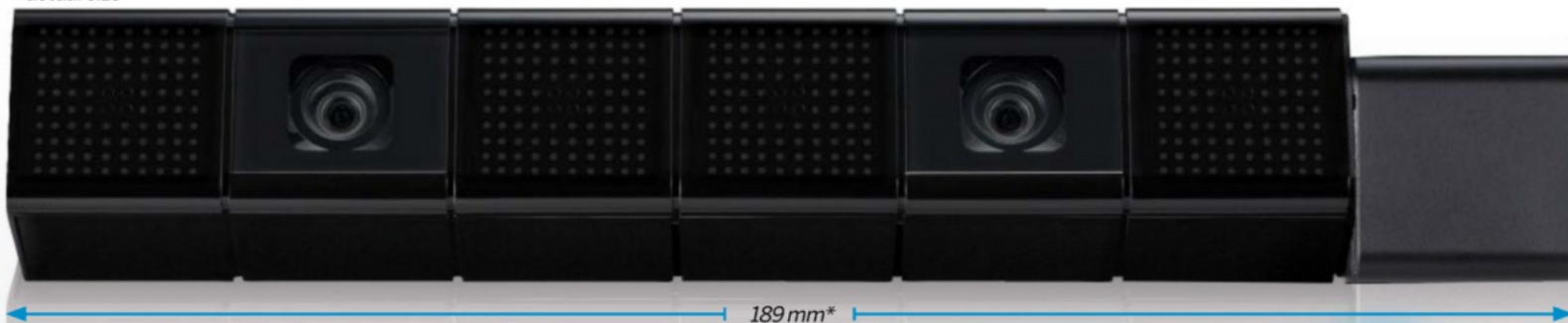


MAGMA RED/WAVE BLUE DUALSHOCK 4 CONTROLLERS

£54.99 / \$59.99

■ The sleek black finish on the standard DualShock 4 is the classic look, but these two alternate colours look pretty darn fetching as well. Many people will probably want to stick with the traditional but for those that don't want everything to be black (or want finding a lost controller to be that little bit easier in an age where every other gadget and device is black), these are surely just the first of many rainbow-flavoured alternatives.

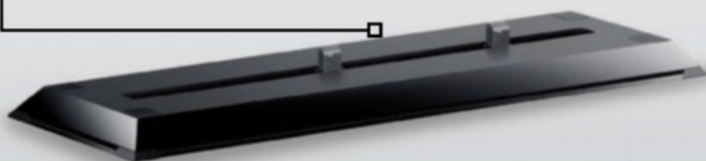
*actual size



PLAYSTATION 4 STAND

£15.99 / \$19.99

■ While the PS4 is designed to work vertically, anyone that has ever knocked a free-standing console over will know the horrible scratchy fate that befalls any disc unfortunate enough to be in the machine at the time. Reduce the risk of your new toy tumbling with this neat stand, which bolts directly onto the base of the console for maximum stability.



PS MOVE

£22.99 / \$24.99

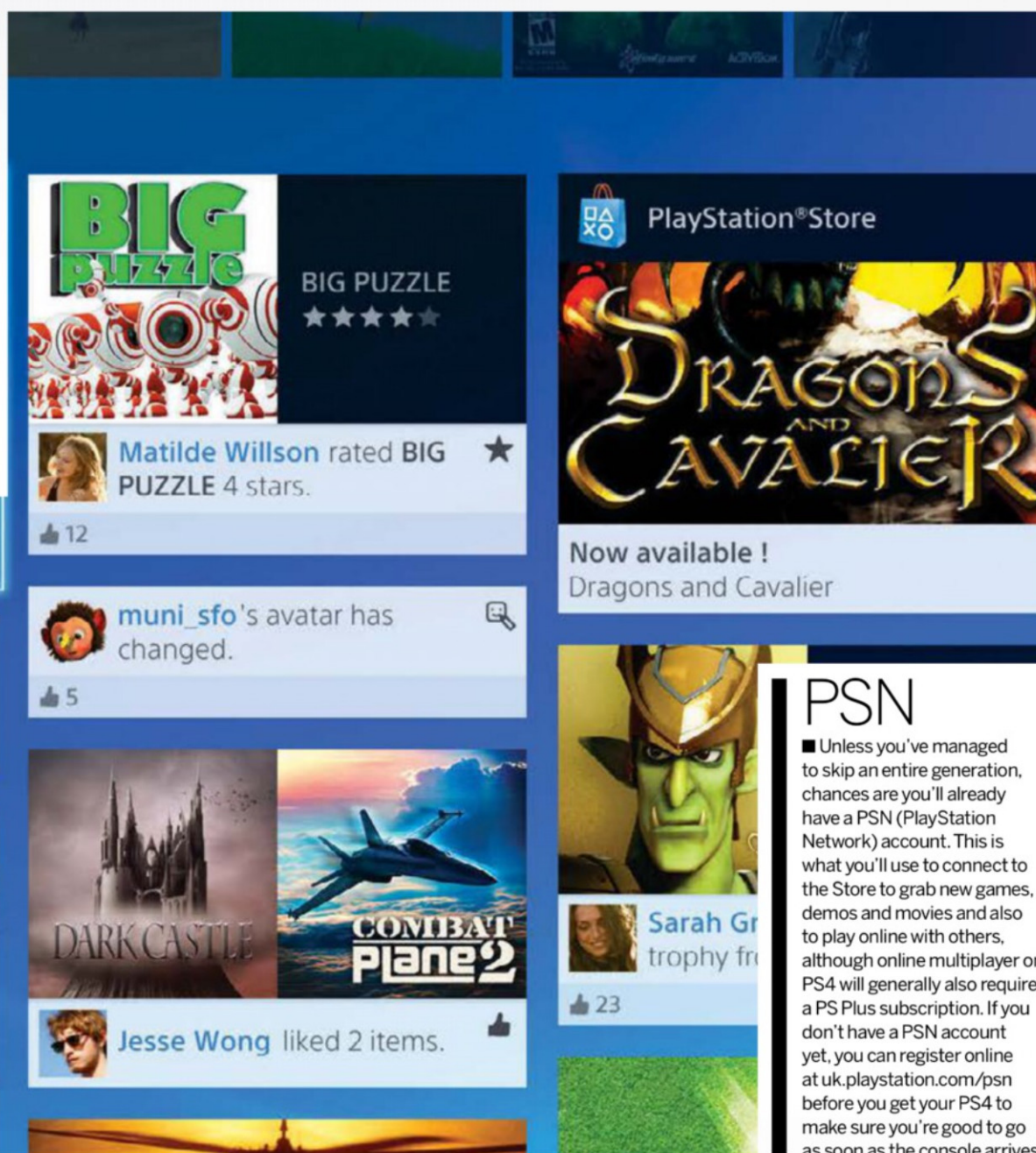
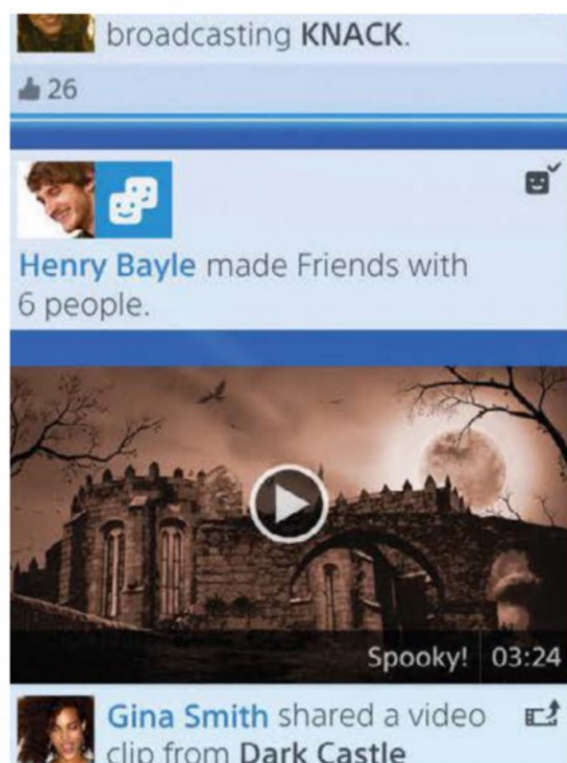
■ If you've been hitting PlayStation 3 gaming hard, chances are you'll already have one of these amusingly-shaped wands kicking around somewhere. Working in conjunction with the camera, it's a take on the Wii's motion control remote that benefits from greater accuracy and reduced latency compared to the Nintendo device (yes, even with the MotionPlus extra) and games such as *Octodad* are already confirmed to be Move compatible.



THE SERVICES

Sign up now to save yourself a bit of time on the big day

Are you a LoveFilm subscriber? Do you regularly tell the world what you just had for lunch on Facebook or Twitter? And have you been enjoying all the awesome freebies that you get on PlayStation Plus? There are loads of accounts to set up before you can get the absolute most out of your lovely new PS4, but here are the basics. And to be fair, you've probably got most of the bases covered already...

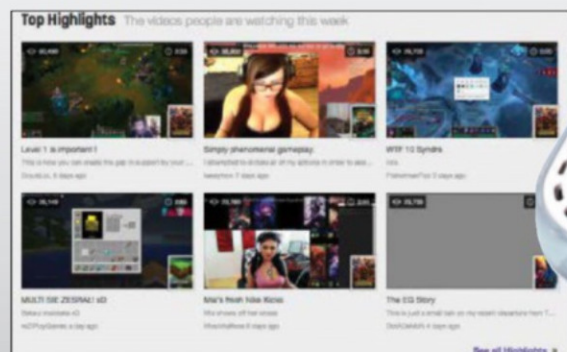


PSN

■ Unless you've managed to skip an entire generation, chances are you'll already have a PSN (PlayStation Network) account. This is what you'll use to connect to the Store to grab new games, demos and movies and also to play online with others, although online multiplayer on PS4 will generally also require a PS Plus subscription. If you don't have a PSN account yet, you can register online at uk.playstation.com/psn before you get your PS4 to make sure you're good to go as soon as the console arrives.

TWITCH/USTREAM

■ Streaming is already big business. But as soon as PS4 arrives, it's going to go from being something reserved for enthusiasts and experts to being something that everyone can do. As a result, you'll probably want to get in early on the major streaming sites before somebody snaps up that user name that isn't quite as original as you thought it was. PS4 will support these (and most likely many others as well) but you don't need to use all of them – have a browse of each and see which feels right for you.



FIBRE BROADBAND

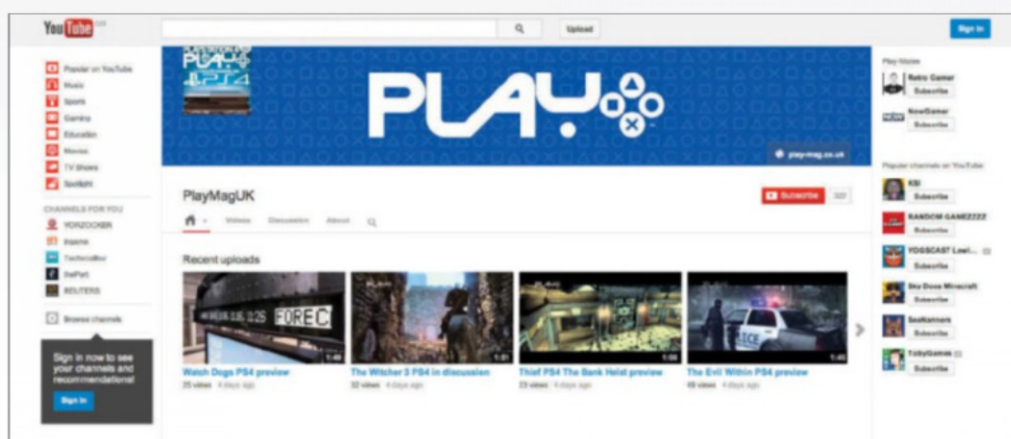
■ While not all areas are served by suppliers offering super-fast broadband just yet, coverage is growing and prices are dropping at quite an alarming rate – we upgraded this month to a line ten times faster than our old one and for just a few pennies more. It's not essential, but having that much more speed and bandwidth will allow for higher quality streaming, quicker downloads and smoother multiplayer experiences, all of which sound great to us. Oh, you'll want it to get the best out of Remote Play and future Gaikai streaming support, too...



FACEBOOK

■ If you don't know what a book of faces is (or why somebody might want one, for that matter), we can only assume you're reading a copy of **Play** that has somehow been jettisoned ten or more years into the past. Twitter and Facebook integration will be bigger than ever with next-gen consoles – from letting friends know what you're playing or when you're streaming to bragging about your latest triumphs and Trophies, you're going to want to let your social media outlet of choice know.

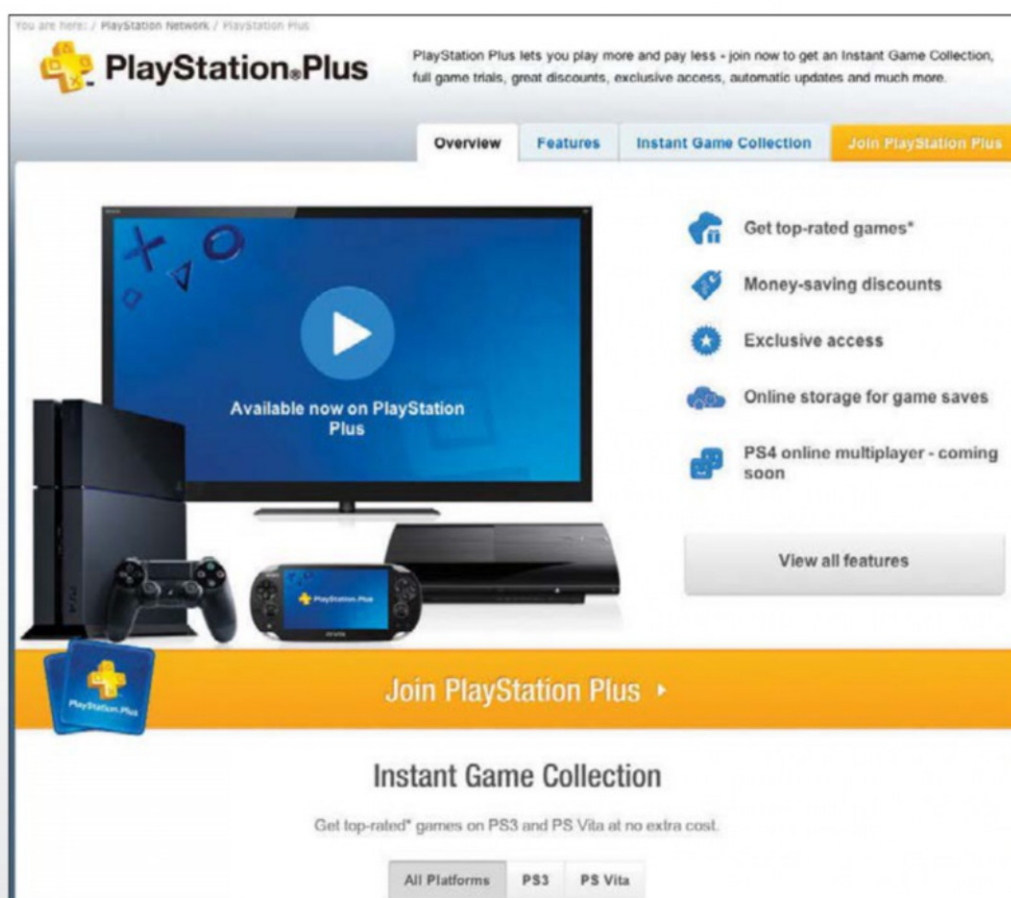




YOUTUBE

■ You don't strictly need a YouTube account but, as a place to post highlights from gameplay, there's no more popular video service on the net. If you manage to get promoted to partner status (which might take quite a while), you'll also be able to stream straight to YouTube rather than specialist sites like Ustream and Twitch, likely meaning a fair bit more traffic – YouTube is a pretty big deal, after all.

“TWITTER AND FACEBOOK INTEGRATION WILL BE BIGGER THAN EVER”



PLAYSTATION PLUS

■ You'll need a PS Plus account to play most PS4 games online anyway, but given how much free stuff that membership entitles you to every single month, we can't see many people getting particularly upset about that extra expenditure. If you have a Vita and/or PS3 as well, it's an even better deal – freebies are offered on all three Sony platforms, meaning you can stock up on games without having to pay for anything more than your PS Plus subscription.

THE CLOUD EXPLAINED

PLAYSTATION 4-CAST: CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF AWESOME

You've probably heard all the major players bleating on lately about cloud this and cloud that, but what does it all mean? Let's find out...

WHAT IS THE CLOUD?

The simple answer is also the most confusing – the cloud itself doesn't actually exist. It's simply a way of referring to any service that uses remote servers to store data or launch applications via the internet. There's not one big computer somewhere called The Cloud that magically makes games better, just servers provided and run by developers and publishers to remotely handle various tasks.

WHAT CAN THE CLOUD DO?

PS3 and Vita players will likely already be aware of the simplest application of cloud technology, namely the ability to remotely store game data. Saves can already be stored in the cloud, allowing access to them from any online console while also allowing the sharing of data between multiple different consoles (such as having save games available for both PS3 and Vita versions of a game). The second major application of the cloud is remote streaming of software, which is where Sony's Gaikai acquisition will come in – games are launched and run on remote servers, firing back the game display to your screen while controller inputs are sent directly to the remote server. There's usually a small amount of latency involved – sending commands to a remote server and having it return a video feed over the internet naturally takes a small amount of time, after all. But with the right infrastructure and a fast connection, this shouldn't be more than a fraction of a second. It's just like how Vita can remotely play PS4 games – just imagine the PS4 in this case is a remote server and the Vita is any compatible device and you're on the right track.



ANYTHING ELSE?

Sure. In theory, remote servers can also be used for processing, lending their power to the machine being used. Sony has so far focussed on the two previously mentioned implementations – cloud saves and game streaming – while Microsoft has focused on this aspect as a way of making up for the Xbox One's considerably lower raw processing power compared to PS4. The truth, however, is some way from the 'infinite power' boost that MS's PR department keeps banging on about. As with game streaming, there's going to be some latency involved in sending data back and forth between hardware and remote servers. Considering that even in optimal conditions remote computation is going to be hundreds (if not thousands) of times slower than local CPU grunt work, the actual boost to a console's raw power will be extremely limited and extremely situational right now.

SO WHICH IS BEST?

Sony's approach is the most practical given the current digital infrastructure in place in PlayStation's primary territories, but Microsoft's vision is certainly forward-thinking – as network speeds improve and developers find increasingly clever ways of outsourcing processing tasks to the cloud, games will inevitably be able to improve. That being said, this is not a unique feature to Xbox One – once the tech is viable and provides tangible benefits, we've no doubt that Sony will implement similar functionality. But with streaming experts Gaikai on board, Sony would certainly appear to have the edge when it comes to streaming – the PS4 is built around the concept, in fact.

THE LAUNCH LINE-UP

A CLOSER LOOK AT ALL THE BIG RETAIL TITLES COMING TO PS4 THIS YEAR

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS

DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION



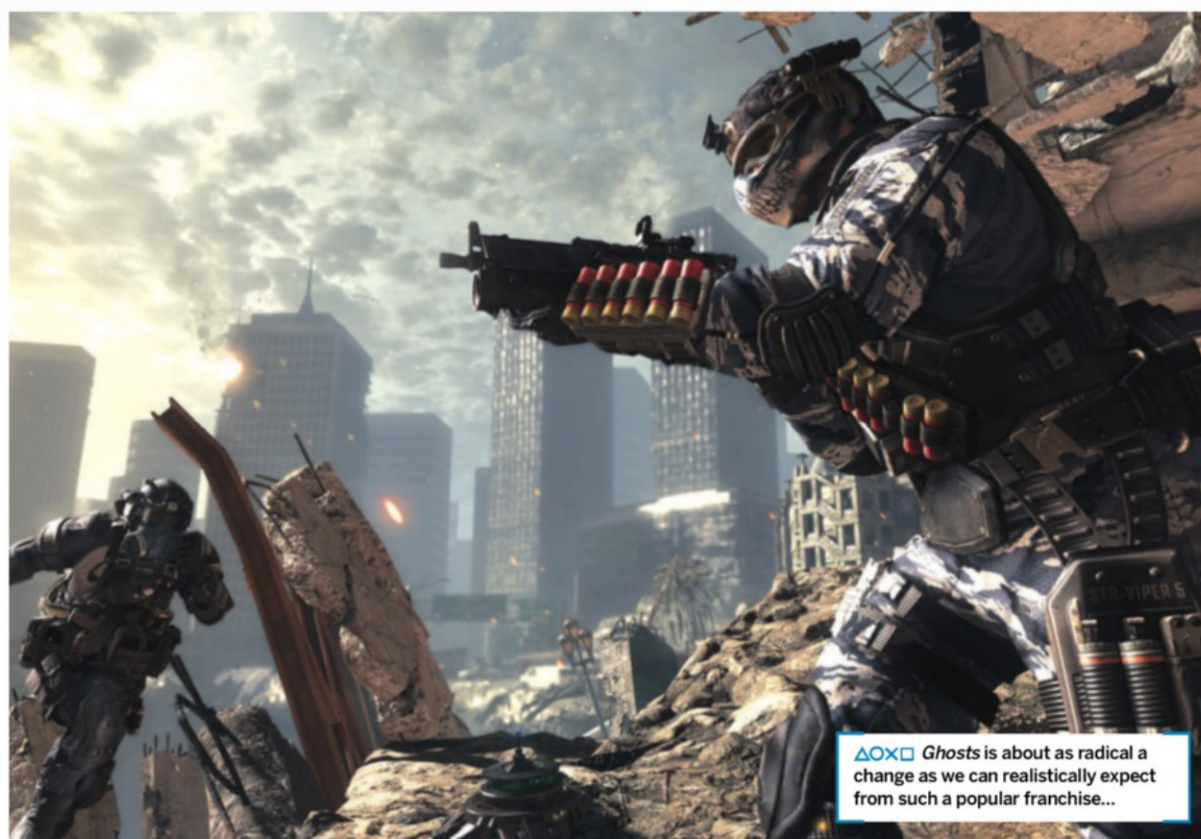
Ghosts is the no-brainer purchase on the list – you can almost guarantee that when the first data comes back about PS4 online

play, this will have been the most popular online game. There's a noticeable leap in visual fidelity from PS3 to PS4 and without sacrificing the series' all-important 60fps frame rate, while the action still bolts along at breakneck speed. The solo campaign looks as daft as ever but when multiplayer is this good, who really cares?

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

7

WHY YOU NEED THIS: BECAUSE EVERYBODY WILL BE PLAYING IT ONLINE



△OX□ *Ghosts* is about as radical a change as we can realistically expect from such a popular franchise...

△OX□ The fastest cars in the world, now even shinier thanks to the magic of PlayStation 4. Lovely.



NEED FOR SPEED: RIVALS

DEVELOPER: GHOST GAMES PUBLISHER: EA



Many have expressed concern that the mighty Criterion isn't behind the wheel of *Rivals*. Pick up the controller, though, and you'll see just how much of the *Burnout* team's special sauce has been ladled over Ghost Games' debut. Autolog is taken to a whole new level here and with the additional Share functionality, there's no achievement or triumph that need stay in the dark. The arcade racer of choice.

WHY YOU NEED THIS: THERE WON'T BE A NEW BURNOUT FOR AGES

RACING
CHOICE

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

8



WHY I'M GETTING...

BATTLEFIELD 4 & LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES



Choosing which games to get at launch is an interesting task, as honestly there aren't many launch

games I'm bothered about. There are way more games to choose from than most console launches, sure, but they've tended to be lacklustre in the past and this time isn't really much different.

Killzone Shadow Fall seems to be the big must-have title for most, but I honestly don't give much of a crap about it. *Killzone* has always been a mediocre franchise as far as I'm concerned, and as good as *Shadow Fall* looks, I can't bring myself to be excited about it.

Between *Killzone*, *COD* and *Battlefield FPS* fans have a bevy of choice for launch titles. I'll probably grab *Battlefield 4* myself, as I've always been fond of its huge maps and vehicular warfare. *Battlefield 3* on console was a big disappointment in comparison to the superior PC version, but hopefully the power of PS4 will mean the console versions of *Battlefield 4* are just as impressive as their PC counterpart.

Of course, there's one game I simply have to buy, no questions asked: *Lego Marvel Super Heroes*. Any game that allows me to play as little Lego versions of Daredevil and Hawkeye immediately gets the patented Sam Smith double thumbs up.

Add in the free games we'll all be getting with PlayStation Plus eventually and free-to-play games like *DC Universe Online* and *PlanetSide 2* and there is plenty to keep me occupied for those first few months. All the stuff I'm most excited for hits next year – *Destiny*, *Metal Gear Solid V*, *The Witcher 3*... the future is looking bright.

SAM SMITH

BATTLEFIELD 4

DEVELOPER: DICE PUBLISHER: EA



COD may have a chokehold on the multiplayer shooter market on console but *Battlefield* has always been big business on PC. And now, with the power of PS4 finally allowing the next-gen version of *Battlefield 4* to just about reach parity with the stunning PC version (both in terms of visuals and features), EA's large-scale shooter could be poised to steal back its FPS crown. With destructible environments and epic 64-player online matches, this is a shooter on a scale that few have attempted on console – and those that did failed. But if anyone can get it right, it's those guys at DICE.

HOW NEXT-GEN?

8

WHY YOU NEED THIS: SCALE REALLY MATTERS IN ONLINE MULTIPLAYER

“EA'S LARGE-SCALE SHOOTER COULD BE POISED TO STEAL BACK ITS FPS CROWN”

FIFA 14



SPORT CHOICE

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS PUBLISHER: EA



It's been out for so long that you probably already picked up *FIFA*, but with so many retailers offering deals when you upgrade from the PS3 version of a game to the PS4 one, it's probably time to think about making a substitution. It's pretty much the same game you've been getting cross with for the last few months, just with a few tweaks and improved visuals. The Share button will come into its own here as well, allowing you to show the world your net-busting free kicks and career-ending challenges.

WHY YOU NEED THIS: IT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL GAME

HOW NEXT-GEN?

8



△○×□ FIFA's emphasis on recreating the match day experience is helped no end by vastly improved visual quality.



INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

DEVELOPER: NETHERREALM STUDIOS PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS



A latecomer to the PS4 party but still a welcome one. Most genres are pretty well represented in the PS4 launch line-up but until NetherRealm announced that its DC-based brawler would be joining the day-one list, there was a noticeable fighter-shaped gap. Whether or not Solomon Grundy and Doomsday will actually fit into that gap is another matter, but the game itself proved to be a pleasant surprise earlier in the year and it's (Justice) leagues ahead of *Mortal Kombat* in terms of gameplay. *Injustice* is presented here with all its DLC, meaning you also get to play as Scorpion. For some reason.

HOW NEXT-GEN?

4

WHY YOU NEED THIS: YOU NEED MORE JUMP-BACK-EYE-LASER SUPERMAN



JUST DANCE 2014

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PARIS PUBLISHER: UBISOFT



The token 'chuck it into the bundles to make up the numbers' game, Ubisoft's dancing franchise has somehow become a worldwide hit despite being rubbish. We still don't know how exactly the PS4 version will work – be it just

using the camera, tracking Move or just tracking the DualShock 4 – and frankly, we don't really care either. We're not buying the most powerful console on the planet so we can dick about in front of some badly-dressed silhouettes while a game guesses whether we're any good at dancing. That sounds like THE WORST.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

1

WHY YOU NEED THIS: YOU'RE A SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL



KNACK

DEVELOPER: SONY JAPAN STUDIO PUBLISHER: SONY



It's a bit of a shame that *Knack* has to launch alongside a *Lego* game, something that feels surprisingly similar in audience and tone but is infinitely more established in gaming circles. With an interesting core mechanic (well, provided

Sony can make full use of the size-changing gimmick – it has seemed like a bit of an afterthought so far), decent stylised visuals and some cool new hardware-side features to showcase, we've little doubt that *Knack* will be a decent game. We just also have little doubt that running around as *Lego Wolverine* will be quite a lot more fun.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

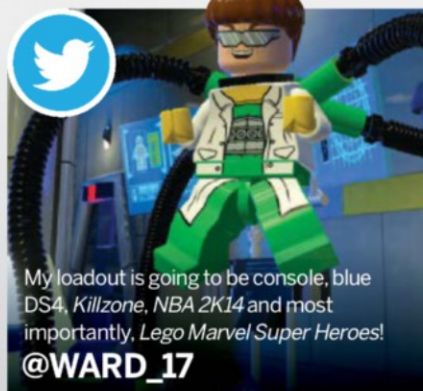
5

WHY YOU NEED THIS: TO SEE IF GAMES CAN OUTSHINE TOY STORY YET



WHAT YOU'RE GETTING...

Most people seemed to have a fair idea of what they were picking up on launch day. Then the delays came...



△×□ Experience the true power of PS4 with fancier hats, bushier beards and shinier loot than you've ever seen.

"A GAME WHERE FREEDOM AND EXPLORATION ARE KING"

WHY I'M GETTING...

ASSASSIN'S CREED IV & KILLZONE SHADOW FALL



I like pirates and shooting. Wait, that's probably not enough words, is it? Alright, I'll elaborate a little.

When rumours first emerged that Ubisoft could be taking *Assassin's Creed* to the high seas, I did one of my semi-legendary celebratory jigs. It beggars belief that nobody has done a decent pirate action game in pretty much forever and with the simple yet flashy swordplay and proven naval combat (at least some good came out of *ACIII*, eh?). *Assassin's Creed* seemed like a perfect fit. I'm delighted to hear that the teams (all six of them) have nailed it, too – while I'd have happily played the PS3 version, it's not like I'm going to complain about waiting a few weeks for a version that looks significantly better.

As for *Killzone*, I'm a newly converted fan of the franchise after getting hooked on the outstanding *Killzone: Mercenary* for Vita. I've since gone back to the older PS3 games – having played then for an hour or so each before and given up, probably to go back to some JRPG stat banquet or another – and find myself enjoying them much more. It's amazing what one really good game can do for a franchise. *Shadow Fall*'s multiplayer feels a little faster than in older games but still manages to retain the weight that series fans love about it, so I can see myself pouring hours into that side of the game. Here's hoping the team looks to *Mercenary* for a few pointers about how to make single-player a little more interesting, too...

LUKE ALBIGÉS



ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL PUBLISHER: UBISOFT



Ever since this was first announced, we've been fully on board with the idea of an open-world pirate game. Seamlessly blending sailing, underwater adventure and land-based action without a sniff of loading, *Black Flag* is a game where freedom and exploration are king and the sprawling take on the Caribbean looks jaw-droppingly pretty on PS4. Naval battles (the only good bit of *ACIII*) return better than ever because pirates, while even multiplayer feels like it makes more sense with the new buccaneering slant. Sounds good, right? And it very much is. Check out the full review on page 66 to find out more.

WHY YOU NEED THIS: TO WASH AWAY THE BAD TASTE LEFT BY *ACIII*

HOW NEXT-GEN?





MADDEN 25

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PUBLISHER: EA



While *FIFA* will be the sports game of choice for the European market, this will do the same kinds of silly numbers in the US where 'football' involves surprisingly little use of the feet. Like *FIFA*, it's almost worth the upgrade for the vastly improved visuals alone and while the niche nature of the sport (outside the US, at least) probably won't put it on the day-one wishlists of many in Europe, EA will still be going all out to ensure that those who do dive into the bone-crunching fray don't leave disappointed.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

6

WHY YOU NEED THIS: GAMES WITH PLAYBOOKS ARE SURPRISINGLY RARE

ΔΟΧ Never has carrying a lump of pigskin from one end of a lawn to another been more important...

THE CHECKLIST

Big-ass HDTV (native 1080p output is a noticeable step up from 720p on anything 40" and up)



Space under the TV (the dusty old Wii can probably go in the loft now)



Super-fast broadband connection (for streaming, sharing and Remote Play)



Twitch/Ustream account (be ready to stream from the moment you start playing)



PlayStation Plus subscription (for playing games online and filling your hard drive with free stuff)



At least £350 (more if you're planning on grabbing additional games and extras)



Christmas presents for everyone (because there's no way you'll get round to it once you've got a PS4)



NBA 2K14

DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS PUBLISHER: 2K



A few guys in the office have picked this up after their swear boxes overflowed while playing *FIFA*, and they love it. The flashy action of basketball just lends itself that much better to PS4 than pretty much any other sport – highlight reel moments come thick and fast and there'll be enough showstopper dunks and amazing drives to wear out the Share button in just a few games. If it's as good as the PS3 version but with those lush next-gen visuals, we'll be on board.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?

8

WHY YOU NEED THIS: BECAUSE YOU REALLY LIKE BASKETBALL



LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES



DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS



There's not a lot to be said about the *Lego* games that hasn't already been covered in reviews of the countless titles that have come before this. Still, the all-star Marvel cast lends itself better to the style and structure of the game than any previous entry in the smash crossover franchise – having all kinds of crazy superpowers to switch between will offer even more options, even more variety and even more longevity. Is it going to show off your new console? Hardly. But all the same, only a fool would bet against a *Lego* game. Especially one with a comically oversized version of Hulk in it. That was what sealed the deal for us.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?
5

WHY YOU NEED THIS: TO LAUGH AT HOW BIG LEGO HULK IS

NBA LIVE 14

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PUBLISHER: EA



EA has been out of basketball for a good few years now, ever since its last *NBA Live* game was cancelled mysteriously on the eve of release, apparently due to concerns over its quality. But now, with new hardware levelling the playing field, it's time to see if the big-time sports player can shake off several years' worth of rust and dethrone the reigning champs. Just as Konami's *PES* improvements make *FIFA* a better game through necessity, we're optimistic that the same will happen here – if *Live* can't compete with *2K14* (which we've played, and is ace) then it'll likely be sent back to the bench for another few years.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?
8

WHY YOU NEED THIS: TO WELCOME BACK A RETURNING FRANCHISE



SKYLANDERS SWAP FORCE

DEVELOPER: VICARIOUS VISIONS PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION



While many write off Activision's toy-based franchise as being a cash grab, the core games are surprisingly entertaining. Taking the form of simple action-RPGs where the player-character can be switched at any time, it's sort of an entry-level *Diablo III* and, in that respect, *Swap Force*'s new gimmick works perfectly. Top and bottom sections of the toys can be mixed to create hundreds of characters – there's finally a reason to buy more figures outside of completionism. It's not the best showcase for PS4's crazy power, but the next-gen version will be the best.

HOW
NEXT-GEN?
4

WHY YOU NEED THIS: YOU'VE ALREADY COLLECTED THE REST



△○×□ Which of the two rival NBA games will you be getting – the tried and tested or the returning challenger?



△○×□ *Shadow Fall* is the standout title of the launch line-up. It looks insane and plays as well as we hoped.

KILLZONE: SHADOW FALL



DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA GAMES PUBLISHER: SONY



Given that the Mega Bundle represents outstanding value for money, we wouldn't be at all surprised if a lot more people ended up getting *Killzone* than originally planned to. And since a multiplayer shooter usually lives or dies based on its community, getting it into as many homes as possible is crucial. Smart play, Sony. Guerrilla's shooter somehow manages to look better every time we see it and with *Mercenary* refusing to leave our Vitas, excitement for *Shadow Fall* is at an all-time high. It's time for *Killzone* to step up into the big league – here's hoping its next-gen debut doesn't squander the series' best chance yet at the big time.

HOW NEXT-GEN?

10

WHY YOU NEED THIS: IT'S THE PS4'S FLAGSHIP LAUNCH TITLE

THE FULL LAUNCH LIST

EVERYTHING COMING TO PS4 THIS YEAR, BUT WHICH WILL YOU GET?

- ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG ☐
- BATTLEFIELD 4 ☐
- COD: GHOSTS ☐
- FIFA 14 ☐
- JUST DANCE 2014 ☐
- KILLZONE SHADOW FALL ☐
- KNACK ☐
- LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES ☐
- MADDEN NFL 25 ☐
- NBA 2K14 ☐
- NBA LIVE 14 ☐
- NEED FOR SPEED: RIVALS ☐
- SKYLANDERS: SWAP FORCE ☐
- INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US ☐
- BASEMENT CRAWL ☐
- BLACKLIGHT: RETRIBUTION ☐
- CONTRAST ☐
- COUNTERSPY ☐
- DC UNIVERSE ONLINE ☐
- DIVEKICK ☐
- DOKI-DOKI UNIVERSE ☐
- FLOWER ☐
- HOKUM ☐
- MINECRAFT ☐
- N++ ☐
- PINBALL ARCADE ☐
- PLANETSIDE 2 ☐
- POOL NATION FX ☐
- RESOGUN ☐
- SUPER MOTHERLOAD ☐
- TINY BRAINS ☐
- WAR THUNDER ☐
- WARFRAME ☐

PLAYROOM

A hands-on guide to the pre-installed tech demo that showcases PS4's new features

THE CONTROLLER ROBOTS

■ Who knew that instead of boring old circuitry and wiring, the inside of the DualShock 4 actually houses a tiny robot clubhouse? Jumping into the controller via the TV, you're greeted by a congregation of robotic subjects, huddled together in rapt anticipation. Tap the buttons and disco lights flash, prompting the robots to bust out synchronised dance moves. Click the touchpad and a beam of white light shines down into the controller, which the robots stare up at in reverence like the claw-worshipping aliens in *Toy Story*.

Not that you have to play the dotting, benevolent deity, of course. If you're the sort of person who, by law, isn't allowed pets, you can flip the controller over and cackle as the robots fall and tumble around inside. Cover the Lightbar and it goes dark. Shake the controller and the robots scream. Flick robots out onto the carpet with a swipe of the touchpad, and you can kick them across the room via the PS Eye camera. We learned a lot about ourselves in the time we spent with our beleaguered AR subjects – not much of it good.



△○×□ These little robot dudes are all kinds of adorable. Can we have a real one please? We promise to be nice to it...



AIR HOCKEY

■ The other game on offer is disappointingly robot-free. Each player takes control of a virtual paddle on either side of the screen, and bats a ball back and forth with their opponent, trying to slip it past their defences in a best-of-seven tournament. You control the paddle entirely with the touchpad, flicking up and down to volley incoming shots and clicking it in to serve.

Essentially, it's *Pong*, but with the added (and literal) twist that turning the controller bends field of play as well, like you're turning a sheet of paper in different directions between two hands. This added a new level of strategy to our game – specifically the strategy of keeping the controller as level as bleeding possible, because we weren't good enough to use the twistiness to anyone but our opponent's advantage.



"THE ROBOTS STARE UP
IN REVERENCE LIKE THE
CLAW-WORSHIPPING
ALIENS IN TOY STORY"



△○×□ Never underestimate the
emotional connection that can flourish
between gamer and pretend robot thing.

ASOBI

■ Asobi is another robot, but only appears in the singular. He (or possibly she) takes the form of a hovering metal ball with a blue LED display to show its expressions, like a squat EVE robot from *Wall-E*.

Once summoned, Asobi buzzes around your head, looking for attention. But while the Controller Robot collective exists to show off what can be done with the DS4, Asobi's interactions are all done by hand, with your movements tracked via the PS Eye. Tickling the cords dangling from its underside makes Asobi happy (us too, incidentally), while swatting it makes its eyes flash red and prompts it to fire missiles at you. Which, you'll recall, doesn't happen in *Wall-E*.

Finally, hiding your eyes behind your hands and peeping out at it through the gaps between your fingers makes Asobi sad – big, blue droopy eyes as it hovers up close to you, whining for affection like a spurned puppy. "Play with me," those eyes plead, tearfully. "Why won't you play with me?" And just like that you can never, ever turn Asobi off again.

WIN! A PS4 WITH COPIES OF ACIV AND COD: GHOSTS

For your chance to win a shiny new console with some of the best launch games, simply answer this question:

Which one of these things is the PlayStation 4 console bigger than?

- A) Italy
- B) A Blu-ray disc
- C) Tom Hanks

Email your answer (along with your name, age and address) to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line **PLAY COMP** before 5 December 2013 to be in with a chance of winning this awesome prize. There's also a sizeable box of game-based tat under Sam's desk, so one lucky runner-up can have that as well. Good luck!

To submit your entry, email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with your answer and subject line: **PLAY COMP**. Please include your full name, age and address. The closing date for entries is **05 December 2013**. Please be aware that entries must be submitted to the above email address only. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland only. The prize is one PlayStation 4 console and bundle of games. Exact games may be subject to change. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your entry.



LONGEVITY

Bungie is planning constant updates to keep *Destiny* going for years. Like the best MMOs, people should still be playing it when they're old and grey.

ETA 2014 | DEV BUNGIE | PUB ACTIVISION | TWITTER @DESTINYTHEGAME

Destiny

Real life is boring – why not be a space ninja wizard?



BUNGIE IS FINALLY free from *Halo*, but it's easy to see that its spirit lives on. From the similar sci-fi setting to the monstrous alien foes, to the recently revealed box art that features a helmet that looks rather similar to a certain Master Chief – the same hands that made *Halo* are clearly at work here, and that's a great thing.

Some are decrying the similarities they see to *Halo* in early footage, but we have the opposite reaction: we love *Halo*, and seeing Bungie continue to make games in a genre that it clearly knows how to pull off is excellent. Indeed, if all *Destiny* turned out to be was a *Halo* MMO, we'd be more than happy.

It's not, though – it's so much more. Bungie is describing *Destiny* as a "shared-world experience", a truthful-enough description, if a little pretentious. Everyone seems desperate to avoid the MMO tag, but *Destiny* looks be taking huge inspiration from the previously PC-oriented genre.

Firstly, you can't play *Destiny* offline. No way, no sir. If you want to play by yourself, fine, but you still need to do it in the same world as everyone else. It might be a bit off-putting to console fans, but PC gamers have been doing this kind of thing for years.

Our story takes place in a post-apocalyptic future. Humanity once ruled the stars in a prosperous period of exploration, peace and technological

PEDIGREE

Sony fans who have never played *Halo* might wonder what the fuss is about. Bungie is one of the best FPS developers in the world, so *Destiny* is kind of a big deal.

NEXT-GEN

Bungie has promised a similar experience across all versions of *Destiny*, but let's be honest: the PS4 version is going to be superior to the PS3 one.



△×□ Bungie appears to be purveying a sci-fi vision that is darker and grittier than its *Halo* series.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ It's made by Bungie! Bungie made *Halo*! *Halo* is great!

□ A cross between *Halo*, *Borderlands* and *World Of Warcraft*.

× Automatic, behind the scenes matchmaking to save you the effort.

○ Planned updates means the fun will never end.

“BUNGIE IS MIXING IN SOME RPG ELEMENTS TO ITS FPS FORMULA”

enhancement known as the Golden Age. A mysterious event known as 'The Collapse' put an end to these halcyon days, leaving mankind teetering on the brink of extinction. The only survivors now live back on Earth, saved and protected by The Traveller, a huge white orb whose appearance centuries before allowed humanity to reach the stars in the first place. The Traveller now hovers over the last human city, granting strange powers to the Guardians of the City.

The game starts as humanity begins to reach out beyond its borders once again, the Guardians setting out to reclaim the galaxy they once owned from hordes of hostile alien races.

Players choose one of three races and one of three classes, and it's here that we begin to see how Bungie is mixing in some RPG elements to its proven FPS formula. Hunters, Warlocks and Titans vaguely conform to Ranger, Mage and Tank RPG

archetypes, although Bungie has promised that the amount of character customisation on offer will ensure that you can play your class in any manner you choose. Instead of determining how you play, the class you pick will serve as a starting point from which the player can create their own avatar.

The RPG influences extend to the gameplay, with more than a nod to *Borderlands* in particular. Enemies have health bars and titles above their heads, with lost hit points being displayed as you shoot them. Your character has gear that can be equipped and upgraded, and finding new loot is one of the key hooks that keeps you playing. Again, it's nothing new to MMO players, but merging these ideas with an FPS and making it accessible to a huge console audience is a relatively new concept.

To be fair to Bungie, there are some ways in which *Destiny* deviates from the classic MMO template quite severely. Aside from hub-world areas where

players can interact, trade and group up, players won't be seeing every other player on the server. Instead, this features behind the scenes, with on-the-fly matchmaking that will match you with other players in the same area and merge you into each other's worlds automatically. Of course, if you want to play with specific people you can do that too.

The main focus seems to be on cooperation, but *Halo* fans need not worry, as Bungie's esteemed competitive play will of course be returning. Little has been said of it yet, but it'll be there.

So yes, *Destiny* looks a lot like *Halo*, and if you didn't like Bungie's past games, odds are this one won't much tickle your fancy either. For those of us that know better, as well as the PlayStation diehards that haven't tasted a Bungie game since *Oni* back on PS2, discovering *Destiny* is shaping up to be one of the most exciting prospects of the next generation.

Sam Smith

DESTINY is in the works up on Bungie's secret moon base. Check the website for more details:
www.destinythegame.com

WHAT
YOU'RE
SAYING...

 Bungie is one of the few devs where I will buy anything they do, I'm all in :-)
@SimeNI

 Looks like *Halo*, that is to say overrated and boring. Never cared about *Halo* before, don't care now
@masterblaster

You Can't wait. My most anticipated game by a bloody mile. Give it to me now!
Jim Johnston

You This game looks amazing. It's going to ruin my life I can tell
GIGADRILLBREAKER

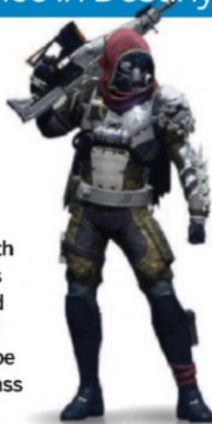
 Cooperative play should make taking down big bastards like this one a doddle when you get online.

CLASS IS IN SESSION

Your first choice in *Destiny* will be which class you become. Take your pick...

HUNTER

Hunters once prowled the wilderness and wastelands, taking whichever jobs pay to make a living. Think of them as your classic rogue/ranger class, with a broad spread of stats that focusses on speed and maneuverability. If you always wanted to be Han Solo, this is the class for you.



WARLOCK

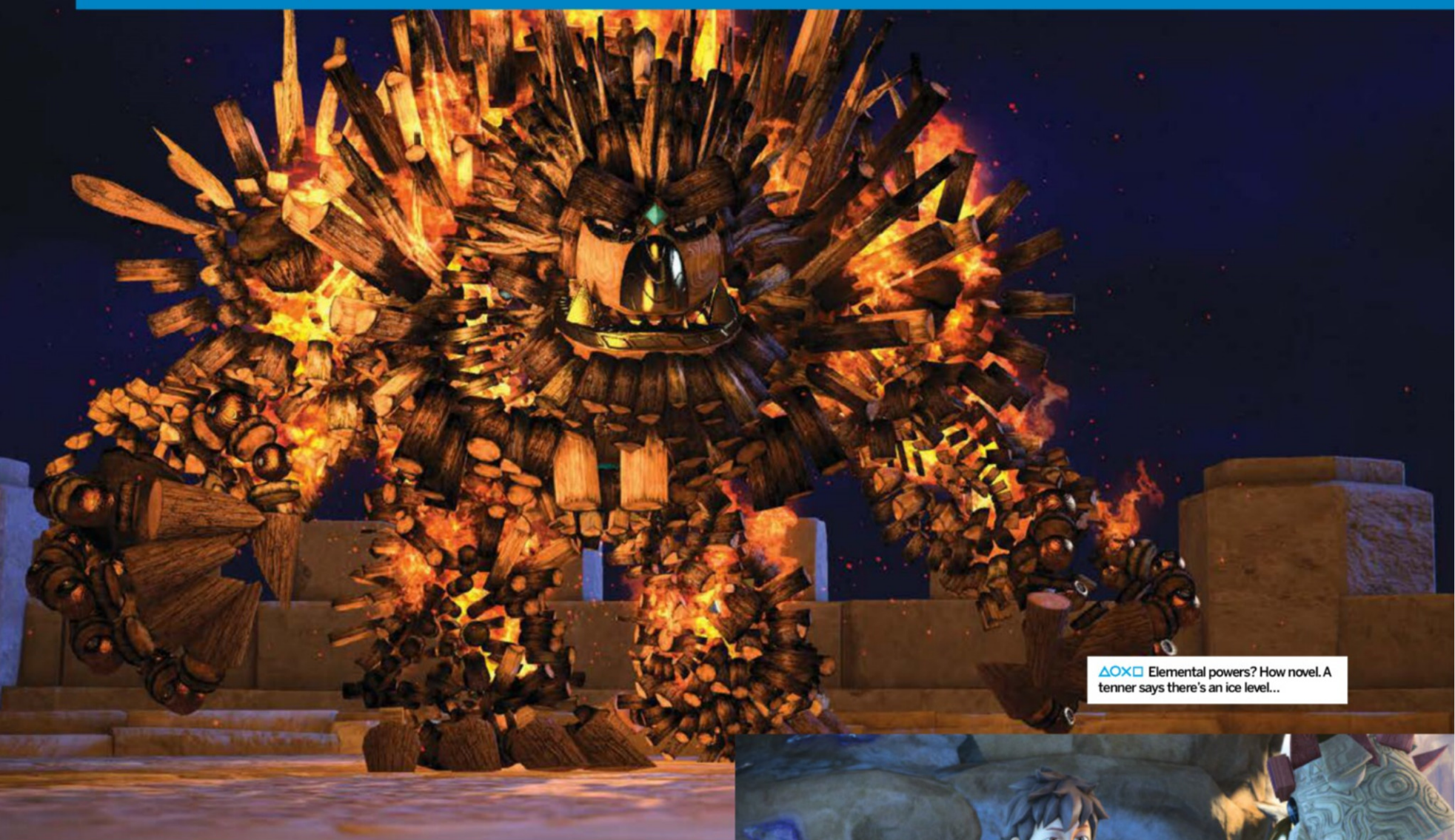
Warlocks have been blessed with special powers by the Traveler and have mastered a small amount of its enormous arcane energies. They still have guns, but this class is all about the spells. Basically, space mages. Yup, it's as cool as it sounds.



TITAN

Titans fulfill the heavy weapons and Tank archetypes: slow and bulky, but equipped with big armour and bigger guns. The first Titans built the huge wall that defends the last human city, and those of the modern age do their best to live up to such a legacy.





△○×□ Elemental powers? How novel. A tenner says there's an ice level...

ETA 29 NOVEMBER | DEV SONY | PUB SONY | TWITTER @PLAYSTATIONEU

Knack

Mark Cerny's launch exclusive is solid as a rock



△○×□ Characters look great, with the possible exception of Knack himself.

PS4 **IN THE BUSTLING** mass of shooters and racers all jumping up and down for your attention on launch day, it'd be almost too easy to overlook Sony Japan Studio's *Knack*. Knack looks like *Ratchet & Clank* – it's a kids' game about a cartoon golem bounding around a Fisher Price world woefully bereft of vengeful aliens and doomsday weapons, with nothing fiercer to worry about than portly pig-men carrying renaissance fair swords and whether or not we'll be able to finish a level before Mum comes in to say it's bathtime.

And this is the lie we must perpetuate as gamers. Because if word ever got out that *Knack* was one of the most jaw-clenchingly hard games we'd played this year, we'd never again be able to hold up our heads in any of Christmas 2013's 'grown-up' titles. Don't be fooled: behind its playful facade, *Knack* is actually hard as nails.

Knack is a golem – a magical refuse pile brought to life and held in humanoid shape by magic crystals. As you romp through the top-down platforming levels, you can break objects to add to your bulk, or lose mass by taking damage. Collect enough raw

materials and Knack transforms into a thundering monster, knocking aside puny enemies or barrelling through them like bowling pins. Suffer too much and he crumbles like bath salts left in a cupboard.

The latter happened more to us than the former. Our hands-on session started early-ish in the story, with Knack in his E3 waist-height form. We skipped jauntily across a rope bridge, enjoying the Disney-esque scenery, when a pig guard ran up to us, hit Knack twice with his sword, and poof! Game over.

After a couple of tries, we passed the starting area and made it to the next, where more guards – this

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ Pixar/Dreamworks-style visuals give *Knack* a family-friendly vibe.

□ It's one of the few major confirmed PS4 games that isn't about shooting people.

× Absorb debris to grow to ridiculous sizes, then use your mass to your advantage.

○ It's way more of a challenge than any of us really expected it to be...



△×□ Don't be fooled by the Dreamworks aesthetic – Knack is tough.



△×□ The plot deals with a human threat, as well as some pesky goblins.



time with swords and bows – awaited us. Knack has a suite of moves that will save his blocks being literally knocked off in combat – a dodge roll, a double jump, an air dash and so on. But using each of these while chaining attacks demands complete focus; mistime a roll or a jump and an enemy will mercilessly lop off a huge portion of your health, and on Hard a single hit is enough to knock Knack into component pieces. You'd never make this connection from the cutesy box art, but splash some red and black paint over Knack's kindergarten colour scheme, throw in a bit of Combichrist and you'd almost be playing *Devil May Cry*.

Things do get easier as you progress. Knack unlocks new abilities as the story moves on, like elemental super moves that eat up collected crystal energy in exchange for a devastating whirlwind

attack or energy blast. Collecting hidden artifacts unlocks a combo meter, which adds damage to every blow Knack lands. And while at the start of the game Knack is noticeably shorter than his aggressors, one later stage sees him lurching around a city under attack, towering hundreds of feet tall and picking up cars to hurl at enemy tanks.

Knack may have sold itself short by positioning itself as the *Ratchet & Clank* of the PS4's launch line-up. But make no mistake: its Dreamworks hero and pastel colours hide a game that's as challenging as any launch title we've ever played.

Richard Wordsworth

KNACK is a PlayStation 4 launch exclusive and is being developed by Sony Japan Studio. Have a look over at uk.playstation.com/ps4/games



ETA MARCH 2014 DEV FROM SOFTWARE
PUB NAMCO BANDAI TWITTER @DARKSOULSGAME

Dark Souls II

From Software, with love



THE RELEASE OF *Dark Souls II* may not be until later next year but that hasn't stopped From Software from teasing us with short demos and restricted betas. So let's take a look back at what we've played and seen so far to assess whether From Software is keeping its hardcore edge...

There are many things in life that are better when soft. Pillows are a prime example. They provide much more comfort when they're filled with feathers rather than rocks, and when you find yourself in the mood for a tall sandwich, it's best if the bread is light and fluffy rather than hard and stale. Conversely, other things benefit from a hard structure or temperament that's solid in nature. This includes the foundation of your house and the fighter you bet your money on in a boxing match. But if there's one thing that benefits from a stern demeanour in the gaming world, it's the no-nonsense *Souls* series.

There were concerns that, after the unprecedented success of *Dark Souls*, From Software would take a more relaxed approach in an attempt to cater for a larger audience. It's a strategy that could've worked on a purely mathematical level and yet, anyone who's familiar with the *Armored Core* series knows that From Software doesn't pull its punches for anyone. It's no less than one of the most hardcore developers in the Japanese games industry, and after playing through the TGS build of *Dark Souls II* before seeing the new beta in action we can safely say that From Software hasn't gone soft.

The first thing that's noticeable about this sequel is that it seems to stick to the series' established formula and framework fairly rigidly. Many of the attack animations look more or less identical, toppling Goliath-like bosses still seems to be the focus and the presentation is just as dark and gloomy as it ever was. Some might see this lack of change as a lazy design choice, but for those who



△×□ The Mirror Knight is one of the game's most publicised bosses, although even having a fair idea of his patterns doesn't make the fight that much easier.

played through the last game multiple times and ticked off every Trophy on the list, the news that *Dark Souls II* doesn't rock the boat too dramatically will likely come as reassurance.

During our hands-on with the most recent build, we were presented with four different classes with which to tackle a ruined fortress. The Warrior was the more vanilla choice with his shield and a choice between a hefty greatsword and a more nimble short sword. The Sorcerer was at the opposite end of the spectrum with his small shield and thrusting sword, but made up for it with a generous complement of spells. This included the familiar Soul Arrow and Soul Spear in addition to the new Soul Greatsword that created a blade that slashed around the player and the Soul Shower that rained projectiles down on the enemy.

The other two classes were the Temple Guard and Dual Swordsman. The former was a compromise of melee and magic with his shield, axe, halberd and collection of Miracles, while the latter was more interesting still thanks to his ability to fight with two swords simultaneously. This significantly reduced his ability to deflect attacks, of course, but



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Erm, it's the sequel to *Dark Souls*?



Improved networking for seamless PvP.



It's as hard as ever – just how we like it.



Did we mention IT'S THE SEQUEL TO DARK SOULS?!



△OX□ *Dark Souls* is many things, but family friendly is not one of them.



△OX□ Considering your environment is always important in *Dark Souls*. Weapons can rebound off walls and pillars if they are too large, so be careful.

TAK MIYAZOE

Q&A

Namco Bandai's publishing producer on death



Is there more expectation with *Dark Souls II* to be a success than there was with the first game?

From a publisher standpoint I think the approach we take is a little different. As a publisher, business-wise we want the game to do as well as possible. But from a development perspective, I don't think the results of *Dark Souls* really affects how they make their decisions. I think their focus is to deliver a genuine *Dark Souls* experience by maintaining everything that was good and enhancing on other features so they can deliver a great game. They aren't thinking about sales or figures – they just focus on making the best game they can.

Why *Dark Souls II*, and not an entirely new *Souls* game?

Again, from a publisher standpoint, *Demon's Souls* wasn't published by Namco Bandai. Because we've had the privilege

of working on two *Souls* games in succession, it made sense to make it a straight sequel rather than start again with a new name.

Are you keen to push how hard the game still is or are you afraid of alienating people?

How the developer finds that balance is something we focus on. The aim is not to deliver a simply difficult game. What we want the players to enjoy is the sense of accomplishment and achievement when they overcome the challenges. Finding the right balance is difficult. Don't worry, there's no intent to make the game easier: we focus on the core fans.

Was there anything that surprised you in people's reactions to *Dark Souls*?

The fact so many people accepted *Dark Souls* was a surprise. We knew it was a challenging game and at first many people thought it was too hardcore. But we were surprised by how many players were able to pick it up and enjoy it.

his heightened mobility meant that a well-timed roll would often keep him in the fight regardless. It was also interesting to note that, unlike the last game, using Sorcery, Pyromancy and Miracle spells now drains the stamina gauge. So much for making things easier!

The *Souls* series has always featured a combat system that feels very weighted. This is especially true of the larger armaments that can leave you heavily exposed should you miss the mark or time an attack poorly. Even so, the art of swinging a blade in *Dark Souls II* now feels slightly more laboured. This may just be a result of the character builds being a bit on the heavy side, but it genuinely felt like each strike had more untameable momentum behind it – particularly in regard to the Warrior's greatsword. Setting up a successful backstab also requires a lot more precision than it did previously.

In terms of how the game looks, it's fair to say that *Dark Souls II* is the spitting image of its older brother save for a few nips and tucks in the lighting and animation departments. This isn't a huge surprise, given From Software's track record with graphical fidelity, but we could care less about the raw polygon count when the actual world design is this dark and distinctive. And while we're still in the dark about the game's story, it's safe to assume that it'll involve a dark fantasy setting that will leave the plot specifics to the player's interpretation. Oh, and there might be a titanic boss or ten along the way too.



GEAR WORTH DYING FOR

Whenever you release a demo or beta to the public at large, it's only a matter of time before they hack the hell out of it and divulge its inner secrets. This is exactly what happened with the *Dark Souls II* beta, and below you'll find some descriptions for new items and equipment. Consider that a spoiler warning...

DEXTEROUS CONVERSION

SORCERY USED IN SWORDPLAY

Though sorcerers do battle using their intelligence, there are times when physical prowess is the only way to come out on top. This sorcery was developed to aid in such situations.

DARK BURDEN

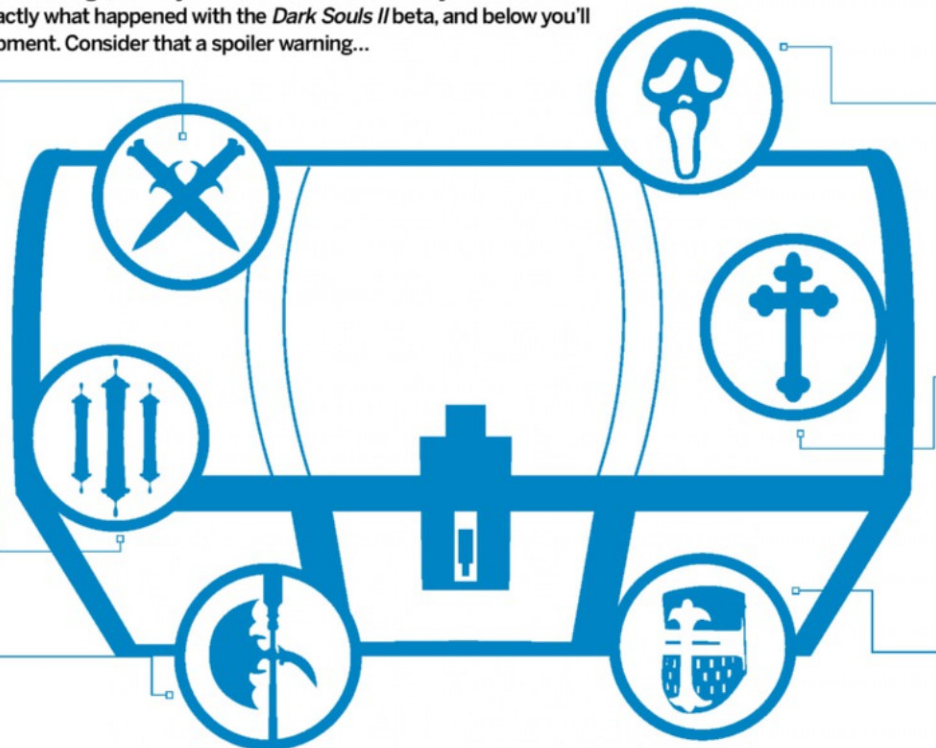
A HEX PASSED DOWN BY GALIO THE HEXER

Instantly doubles the gravitational force exerted within a certain area, making the creatures within heavier. This darkness eats away at the user as well, reducing the user's maximum HP.

DRAGONRIDER'S HALBERD

HALBERD USED BY THE DRAGONRIDERS,
THE RETINUE OF THE KING

Though otherwise traditional in design, these halberds are particularly heavy. A tremendously versatile weapon, allowing for slashing, sweeping and even thrusting attacks.



HUMAN EFFIGY

AN EFFIGY FORMED FROM A LUMP OF
AN UNKNOWN BLACK MATERIAL.

It is warm and strangely soft to the touch. Use this item to reverse Hollowing. When gazing closely at the effigy, one starts to perceive a human's appearance. It is said that the appearance you see is your own true form.

TOKEN OF FIDELITY

**TOKEN RECOGNISING THAT THE
OWNER HAS TRAVELLED WORLDS
TO HELP OTHERS**

When in other worlds, it can be also used to restore the master of the world's HP, but this is only a secondary effect of the item. Simply carrying these tokens shows the depth of the holder's fidelity.

FARAAM HELM

HELMET BLESSED BY THE WAR GOD FARAAM

This helmet is in the style of the Lion Knights, a once-mighty order from Forossa. Although the Lion Knights wore heavy armour, they were feared for their nimble two-handed swordplay.



The words Ornstein and Smough are synonymous with some of the toughest boss battles in gaming. It stands to reason that *Dark Souls II* will test players with a brutal selection of heavy hitters, the likes of which will crush you into the floor for even the slightest lapse. Just how sadistic the team is prepared to push the challenge remains to be seen, but if the Mirror Knight we fought at the end of our hands-on session is anything to go by, From Software is making sure that first, second and probably even third encounters go more or less the same way – badly.

Perhaps best described as a ten-foot tall Greek-style statue that's been brought to life by some nefarious magic, the Mirror Knight holds a large shield in his left arm while rocking a stone sword in his

right. His thrusts and jumping strikes are fairly easy to dodge but the invulnerable shield makes it hard to land a blow unless he's recovering. Worse still, he supplements his physical weaponry with a range of lightning attacks that can hit you from a distance, as well as the ability to summon a human-sized minion from his shield. If you don't kill this underling quickly then the fight can go from pretty tough to totally overwhelming in the blink of an eye.

Like all great bosses, the Mirror Knight isn't without his weaknesses. Most of his attacks can be dodged with careful timing, and as long as you don't let him spawn multiple minions the fight should remain one-on-one. You just can't afford to let yourself get cornered or try to block when your stamina is low. We've also had a chance to try out a number of new items. These ranged from the Radiant Life Gem that slowly restores your health for about eight seconds to the Twilight Herb that restores the number of times you can cast a spell. This is useful for magic-based classes as it means you don't have to visit bonfires so frequently.

If the TGS demo offered some insight into how *Dark Souls II* will work as a single-player experience, then the beta has pulled back the lid (albeit slightly) on the expanded multiplayer. For starters, we now



know that at least two other players can join your world as white phantoms instead of one. This gives the game more of a *Monster Hunter* dynamic, as you can use the power of teamwork to tackle enemies. It also seems that phantoms can now use healing items, albeit at a vastly decelerated rate.

Another thing the beta highlighted was two additional classes. The Soldier carries a spear that can lead to a new backstab animation if you manage to catch an enemy off-guard while the Hunter carries a sword in one hand and a crossbow in the other. The beta also gave us our first look at the revised inventory system. Players can now browse through weapons across a grid and you now have the option of using items without exiting the menu screen. These may sound like fairly insignificant changes, but the game can only benefit from an inventory system that's less clunky and more intuitive.

In terms of making the game more accessible, that's your lot. The enemies we've seen so far include the standard zombie hollows that lunge with rabid ferocity and a new armoured brute that carries a pair of oversized sickles. Get slashed by these blades more than once and the familiar taunting message will flash up on the screen. We've even seen a glimpse of a new boss called the Skeleton King. This fiend resides in a room filled with bones, but instead of just one lumbering construct, the boss takes the form of many modestly-sized skeletons that include the dreaded Wheel Skeletons.

Dark Souls II is shaping up to be the sequel that the fans wanted to see. It retains the foreboding atmosphere, minimal context and complete lack of handholding that made the last game so rewarding while expanding upon its unorthodox multiplayer. Our only concern is whether the team can find the balance between challenging those players who finished the first *Dark Souls* seven times and not completely alienating would-be players who haven't yet tasted the savage brilliance of Anor Londo. It's an unenviable task, for sure, but if anyone can pull it off it's the hardened souls over at From Software.

Matt Edwards

DARK SOULS II is being developed in Japan by From Software. Check the website for more details:
www.darksoulsii.com



ETA 28 FEBRUARY | DEV EIDOS MONTREAL | PUB SQUARE ENIX | TWITTER @THIEF

Thief

Next-gen Garrett stumbles, tumbles and thumps his way towards a potentially great score



THE WINDOW

OPENS with a snap, the lock breaking under the force of the crowbar. Silently we slip over the sill and crouch by the bed, studying the sleeping woman for any signs of disturbance. All is still. We snuff the candle on the bedside table. Gently, we lift the open diary and skim its pages until we chance upon a note revealing the combination to the father's safe. Which we can read without the candle, because 'we' are Garrett – creature of the shadows and dead good at reading incriminating documents in pitch blackness.

We tiptoe downstairs, putting out candles and lamps as we go, a terrible darkness spreading through the peaceful household. In the living room we find the father from the diary. We creep up behind him and thump him with our club. He crumples. We open his safe and snatch the glittering contents. As we return to the upstairs window, we turn and slot an arrow into the

dozing girl. Tomorrow, the father will rush to the head of the City Watch. And from mansions to workhouses and all through the streets they will whisper, "Beware the thief they call Garrett... He's a right bastard."

Outside on the roof, the city is quiet. It's late into the night, and the streets are under curfew after the rioting. A plague known as the Gloom is spreading through the slums and people are starving. The self-proclaimed leader of the lower classes – a mysterious figure called Orion – has rallied those still healthy enough to fight and formed a resistance movement known as the Graven. But the Baron, the despotic ruler of the city, has divided the wealthy from the mob with the City Watch – trained thugs kept in his pocket with coin and food. Meanwhile, Garrett is doing what Garrett does best: planning scores and liberating family heirlooms from mantelpieces. And quite a lot of murder, in our case.

How Garrett comes into this tumbledown pseudo-Victorian

dystopia is still a mystery. We know from the game's narrative director, Steven Gallagher, that Garrett has been missing for a year after a heist gone badly wrong. After teaming up with a former partner – a murder-happy protege turned cutpurse called Erin – she and Garrett stitched old wounds in the name of a once-in-a-lifetime score during the city's Golden Age. But the job was blown when the pair stumbled into a bizarre ritual in the centre of a stately home, and the next thing Garrett knows, it's a year later; the city's gone all wrong and he's living in a clock tower with only ravens for company. What's going on? What will Garrett do next? How will the scales of justice be balanced? We don't know – but 20 gold coins says it'll involve thievery.

In the hour we spent with *Thief*, it was clear that the version we got to play was still an early build: definitely a proof of concept rather than a finished product. The streets of Stonemarket were sparsely populated by beggars and townsfolk

△○×□ This clock tower serves as Garrett's base of operations.



△×□ Eidos Montreal's gloomy vision is reminiscent of grotty historical London.

"A PLAGUE KNOWN AS THE GLOOM IS SPREADING THROUGH THE SLUMS"

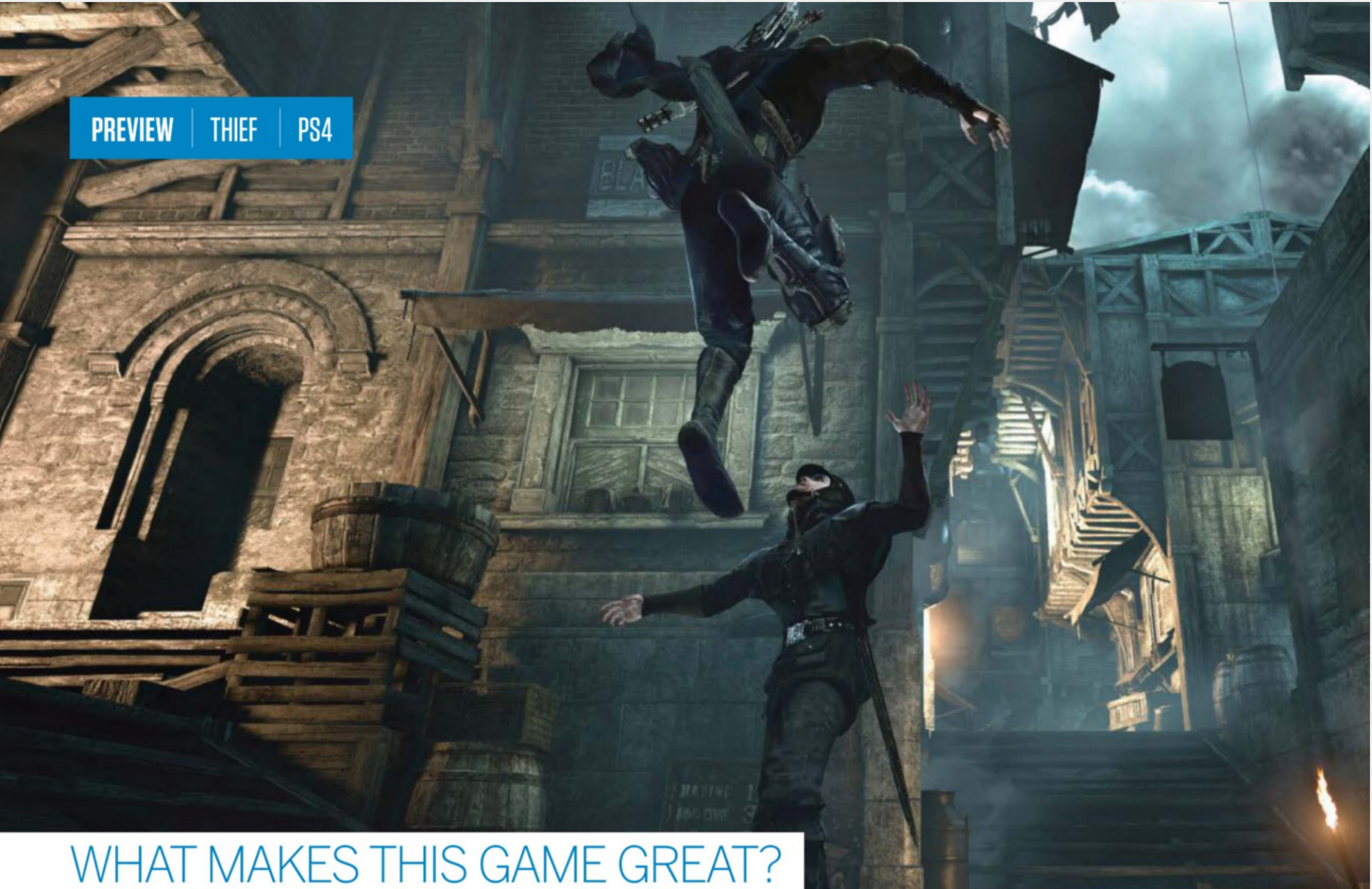


PLAY VIDEO

Watch the trailer on our YouTube channel or your free disc, with team commentary.

You Tube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

△×□ Garrett might have been away for a decade, but it feels like he never left us. Eidos Montreal's *Thief* is a faithful reimagining; a return to old school stealth.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Eidos Montreal's *Thief* is a tough as nails stealth experience – prepare to die. A lot.
- None of that Sam Fisher action nonsense. Engaging in combat is a waste of time.
- Thief* brings out your inner kleptomaniac – every shelf and dark corner holds new loot.
- Thief* is amazingly compelling. You'll want to explore every nook and cranny.



SHARE THIS



The Share button will find plenty of use in *Thief*.

ROOFTOP CHASE

Show the world your daring escapes

Eidos Montreal has purpose-built the reimagining of *Thief* to bring out our inner storytellers. You'll want to tell friends about that time you leaped across rooftops, scrambled into a window only to emerge minutes later with your pockets brimming with treasures. Or how about that time you snuck

through an underground bordello only to find the patrons of the House Of Blossoms out of their minds on drugs and alcohol, leaving their prize possessions ripe for the taking? Thankfully, the Share button is going to provide the perfect way for eager gamers to share their accomplishments with

the world. Then again, we might just use it to share our hopeless attempts at battling three guards at once. We quickly found a sword through our chest, though we thought our determination was admirable. Master thieves really are useless in a straight-up battle – you'll be able to see for yourself this February.



The city guards patrol the streets with an iron fist. Citizens are forced to stew in depravity, though the rich continue to get richer and richer.



climbable surface, he'll bound over it or scramble up it with a hook. Sometimes this can be a bit clunky – Garrett is pretty picky about which surfaces he deigns to climb.

But those breaks in flow are easily fixed, and when the movement system *does* work it's awesome. Defiantly flouting the game's stealth focus, several times we walked, bold as brass, up to one of the city guards and thumped him in the face with our club. As a rule, what happened was a whole garrison of furious guardsmen chasing us through the streets as we ducked into shadowy alleyways, doubled back on ourselves, then escaped to the timber rooftops with our climbing tool, leaping over precipices and finally coming to a stop in the shadows above a town square full of grumbling, clueless plods. Not much of a blow for the proletariat, but a nice look at how well *Thief* can work when all its elements come together.

Exploration is also something that's rewarded, and it's here that the *Deus Ex* DNA congeals most visibly. With a ratchet tool purchased from the doddering fence, the eagle-eyed will be able to unscrew vents and drain covers. These provide alternate routes through missions and the between-mission hubs. One passage led us to an underground hideout for the Graven in which we found a scrawled manifesto calling for the overthrow of the Baron and his corrupt ruling class. Which we nicked, along with everything else that wasn't bolted down.

Avoiding direct confrontation by means of creeping is, of course, a key piece of the *Thief* series gameplay. As Garrett moves about, you'll see his visibility gauge in the bottom corner. This

tells you how likely Garrett is to be detected by roving enemies; a black spot denotes concealment, a grey one that you'll be spotted up close and a full white circle that you're prancing about carefree in full lighting like a larcenous can-can dancer.

TOUGHER THAN LEATHER

Neatly, being spotted isn't an immediate trigger for a flood of guardsmen. As in *Dishonored*, breaking stealth near a hostile character first makes them suspicious. Guards will glimpse something lurking in the dark and move over cautiously to investigate. This gives you a precious few seconds to slip away before you're made; time to escape to the rooftops or into a storm drain. Avoiding detection is made easier by Garrett's Swoop move, which lets him glide silently between different pieces of cover or over short distances. It's not as fun as *Dishonored*'s Blink ability, but performs much the same service, and the experience of *almost* getting caught and then stealing away just in time is wonderfully tense.

Of course, you don't have to skulk about in the gloom. Garrett's arsenal makes him a killer par excellence when the situation calls for it; using a bow to put arrows through eye sockets at long range and the aforementioned club to pummel enemies up close. Combat is all about timing: when a guard raises his sword for a swing, a tap of the Dodge button and a push on the directional stick sees Garrett nimbly sidestep out of the way, after which you're open to follow up with a crushing blow to the noggin. One-on-one, the guards we faced were no match, but groups of them demanded a more tactical approach.

△OX□ Eidos Montreal has included third-person takedowns in *Thief*. They work well enough, though legacy franchise fans will no doubt be up in arms.

who stood about gormlessly until Garrett walked right up to them and thumped them for spare change. The voice acting for Garrett's criminal contacts (a pirate-faced quest-giver named Basso and a swaying old fence flogging arrows and tools) is several quality notches lower than in *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. Garrett was also oddly clumsy. Many were the times he'd be flitting stealthily above the streets of Stonemarket on the hunt for a window to force, only to trip over his own feet and plunge ignominiously to the cobbles below.

Garrett traverses the city the same way as characters do in *Assassin's Creed* – by running at obstacles head-on with the parkour button held down. If Garrett hits a waist-high barricade or a



△OX□ Garrett's arrows give players plenty of non-lethal combat options.



△OX□ *Thief* is one of the best looking next-gen games out there. The lighting is especially impressive.

THE GAMES BEHIND THE GAME

Slurp *Thief* like a fine wine and you'll get hints of...



MIRROR'S EDGE

Mirror's Edge did almost everything wrong – with the exception of its beautiful parkour segments, which were perfection. If Eidos Montreal can fix Garrett's frequent stubbornness in the face of climbing things, he might give Faith a run for her money.



DISHONORED

Corvo and Garrett could trade tips on everything from stashing bodies to the latest in padded leather fashion trends – although given the *Thief* series' age, it's arguably *Dishonored* that owes the most to *Thief*, rather than the other way round.



DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Garrett might not be as ethically malleable as Adam Jensen was, but *Thief*'s twisting vents, underground passages and hidden world details are the trademark signs of the *Human Revolution* development team.

AS QUIET AS A MOUSE

There are non-lethal options available to Garrett as well. His bow is good for more than just nailing hapless sentries in the face – it also comes with fire arrows for igniting flammable liquids, water arrows for extinguishing torches, rope arrows for climbing to higher ground, blunt arrows for causing distractions and another type that releases a cloud of choking dust to incapacitate enemies. In the demo we played, these were a bit hit and miss. Maybe it's a product of all these violent games we play, but the first thing we tried with our fire arrow was aiming one squarely at his chest to see if we could send him screaming through the streets like a living effigy. You can't, it turns out. We understand that these arrows exist to be used tactically, but when the situation is a guard that we want dead, shooting him in the chest with something that's on fire feels like it should be a tactical masterstroke.

There also wasn't a lot of call for distracting guards with the blunt arrows and trying out Garrett's brutal takedown moves. These are like a medieval take on Adam Jensen's arm-blade stabbings from *Deus Ex*, except because augmentations haven't been invented in the world of *Thief*, Garrett makes do with walloping the officers with his club instead.

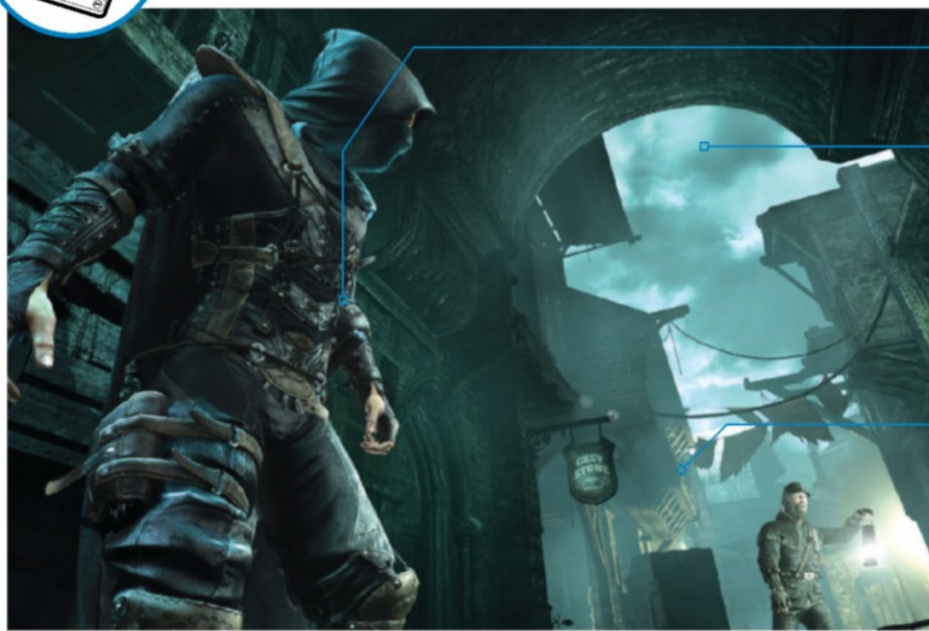
This brings us back to those disturbing opening paragraphs, and a tricky question regarding the balance of *Thief's* story and gameplay. According to narrative director Gallagher, killing is something that Garrett takes very seriously and will only resort to in extreme circumstances. It's this non-lethal approach to thievery and his protégé Erin's blithe indifference to casual murder



△○×□ Are you a fan of *Thief II: The Metal Age*? Then you'll want to get your pre-order in to snag this exclusive bank heist homage pack.



PS3 DIFFERENCES



IMMERSION

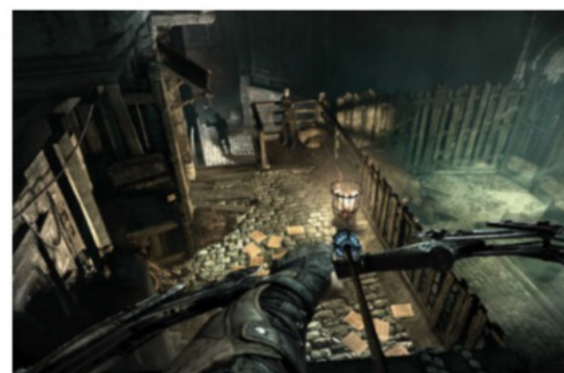
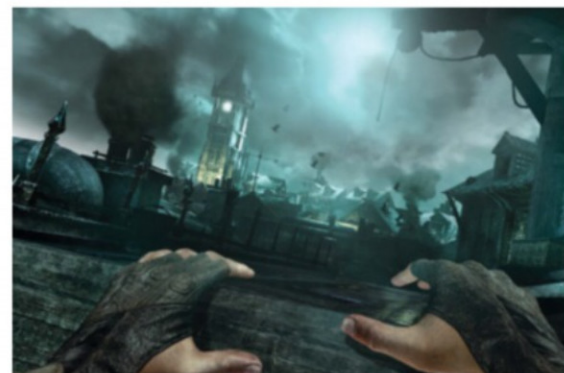
We've no doubt the PS3 version will look great, but with full 1080p immersion, the PS4 version will be the real master thief simulator.

LOADING...

PS4 will feature increased disc read speeds. The same can't be said of PS3, where load times will have to pick up the slack.

DRAW DISTANCE

You can see right to the horizon on PS4. Don't be surprised if the PS3 version of the city is smoggier and visibility is reduced...





PRIOR
FORM

Deus Ex: Human Revolution A prequel to one of the best RPGs ever, *Human Revolution* is a glorious concoction of stealth and combat mechanics with a cracking plot to boot.



“WE’RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THAT...”

We asked the questions; we don’t have the answers

WHO IS THE BARON?

Baron Northcrest is the rich despot now in control of the dying city. Eidos Montreal is keeping schtum about the Baron’s origins and possible role in Garrett’s year-long disappearance. But there is one thing we know, and it’s juicy: at the start of the game, the Baron hasn’t been seen in person for a long time. Is he in hiding? Has he been bumped off? Time will tell.

WHO IS ORION?

The voice of the oppressed, the champion of the masses. He’s the head of the Graven – the resistance movement struggling to overthrow the Baron. What’s his background? We don’t know. Eidos says, cryptically, that he appeared from nowhere. A stooge then? A double-agent for the Baron? Or does he have his own agenda? Whatever the truth, we don’t trust him.

WHO GIVES US OUR MISSIONS?

Off the beaten track, Garrett will find side missions that require him to do more than just thieving. Where do these missions come from? We don’t know. Eidos will only tell us that it has a special mechanic planned that it’s not ready to reveal just yet. A new character, perhaps? A Graven dead letter box? A codified Craigslist post? It could be literally any of the first two.



TOUCH CONTROL

QUICK SWITCH

Not that we struggled with getting around menus, but the PS4 touchpad lets players easily navigate around them, allowing for quicker weapon selection.

that drove the wedge between them ahead of their ill-fated big score. But the game itself does nothing to penalise you for killing indiscriminately, and several times in the demo we sat perched, watching guards on patrol, then dropping them one by one as they passed out of sight of each other. And why not? Why risk sneaking past them when you can just put them down?

Of course, the answer should be ‘because it’s wrong’. But there’s nothing in this build of the game to support that assertion. What little dialogue you can overhear does nothing to make the guards sympathetic, and if they catch sight of Garrett it’s all stab-first-ask-questions-later. There’s no reason, narrative or mechanical, not to simply wipe them away from the rafters with a quiver full of broadheads.

This problem extends to his thieving as well. If you pay close enough attention to the world, you’ll pick up extra challenges and reveal extra opportunities for larceny. One time while we

were getting our bearings on a roof, we heard a conversation between two women coming from an upstairs window. One woman was wailing that her husband was a degenerate drunk and gambler, and that he’d emptied their house of valuables to fuel his nightly debauches. The other then notices that the first’s wedding ring is missing. But it’s okay, because the distraught housewife has hidden the ring in a secret place to keep it safe: the roof outside the window on which Garrett, master thief, is currently squatting. Oops.

Of course, we turned round and, sure enough, there was the wedding ring hidden behind a chimney. So we pinched it. We pinched it without so much as a thought. It smacked of a bad karma choice in *Fallout*, or of something that Evil Corvo might do in a High Chaos *Dishonored* playthrough. But *Thief* doesn’t judge, or even register, that you’ve done something wicked. Whether it’s murdering beggars for one or two coins or stealing a broken woman’s last earthly

possession, the lack of feedback made the world – in this early demo, at least – feel flat and removed from our actions.

The argument for this lack of judgement is simply that Garrett is not a particularly nice guy. According to producer Joe Khoury, he’s completely amoral and driven only by a lust for gold. As such, there’s no morality system planned for the game – a shame, given the segregated lethal and non-lethal options present in *Human Revolution*. Forcing us into playing a no-kills goodie could be annoying when all we want to do is see how many arrows we can fit in a human skull. But in this age of morality-driven games like *Dishonored* and *BioShock*, if we play like a monster we expect to be treated like one, too.

With a while still to go until its February 2014 release date, *Thief* isn’t quite there yet. At its best, this early version hits familiar notes from stand-out games like *Deus Ex* and *Mirror’s Edge*. At the moment, *Thief* isn’t up to the standard of its genre-defining, hub-based, semi-open-world forbears. But with the mechanics and story snippets we’ve seen and Eidos Montreal’s *Human Revolution* pedigree, we really want it to be.

Richard Wordsworth

THIEF is being developed by Eidos Montreal. Check the website for more details: www.thiefgame.com



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Dragon Age: Inquisition

Third time's the charm?



DRAGON AGE HAS always had a rough time of it, creator BioWare always seeming to lavish more love and attention on the *Mass Effect* series than its fantasy step-brother. Add in the misstep of *Dragon Age II* (it was a bit rubbish) and it's understandable that some may have worries for the third instalment.

We managed to get eyes on an exclusive sneak peek of *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, hopefully to put some of those concerns to rest. The demo we saw was not part of the main game, but a side quest designed to showcase how player choices will affect progress in the game.

We're in a medium-sized environment in Ferelden. Some of these are apparently bigger than the entire combined playing area of *Dragon Age II*, we're told – although, to be fair, that isn't difficult. Valleys, mountain ranges and an immense lake make for a beautiful view, and enemy ships belonging to the Red Templars dot the horizon. The area is huge, albeit not Skyrim-sized. Mounts are mentioned, which makes sense considering the size of the world.

The scenario shown is Crestwood – you must determine the fate of the town through your actions. The player is asked whether he wants to send men to protect the village, stay with the wounded or defend the Inquisition's keep. This time, the player

chooses to defend the keep – this will keep the Inquisition strong but undoubtedly lose lives. Varric, one of your three party companions (the others are Cassandra, a returning character, and a Mage, Vivienne) expresses his disappointment at leaving the villagers to die. It's classic Bioware stuff: there is no black or white choice here, merely shades of grey.

The developer has promised that your decisions will carry more weight than ever. On his way to the keep the player sees the villagers under attack. You can step in if you wish, which will again have spiraling effects on what will follow.

Arriving at the keep, we see our first battle. If you've played a previous *Dragon Age* game,



ΔOX□ You know that saying, 'don't
fight fire with fire'? Nonsense. Fight
dragons with fire – huge swords set on
fire, to be precise. Works every time.



ΔOX□ Hopefully BioWare's excellent
characterisation will be as good as ever.



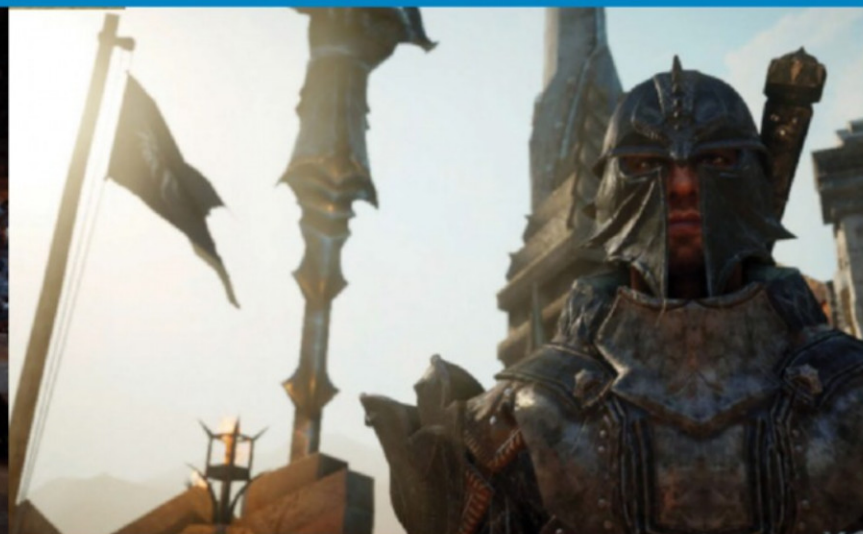
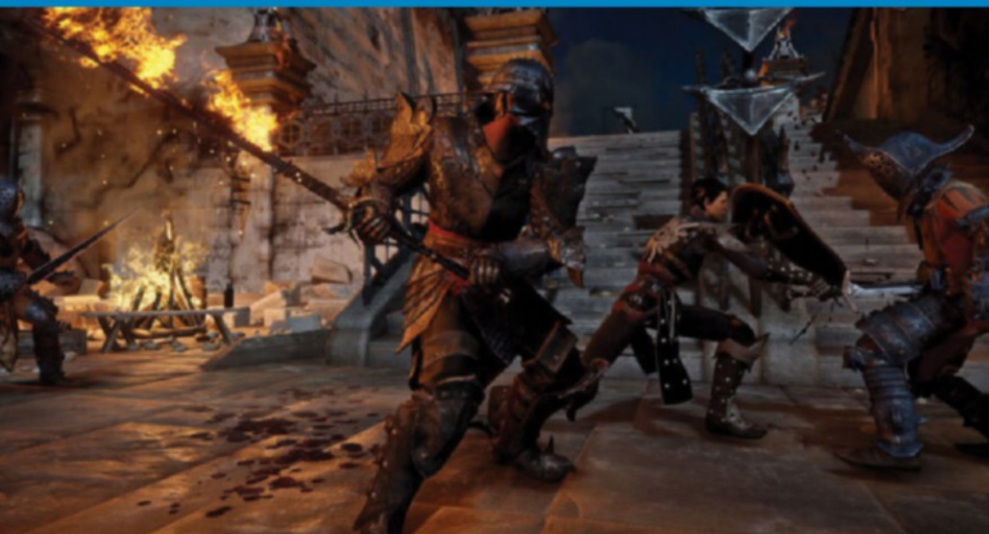
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

▲ Load your *Dragon Age I* and *II* saves to
help form the world.

□ Increased customisation for both yourself
and your party.

✕ It looks proper nice thanks to the Frostbite 3
engine holding it all together.

○ A large, relatively open world that's bigger
than anything the series has seen so far.



△×□ It might not be truly open-world, but *Inquisition* will offer the largest playable landscape yet in a BioWare title.

△×□ Players can create their main character as a human, elf, dwarf, or for the first time, Qunari. Yay for choice!

△×□ Try putting this guy in your mineral collection, Hank.

△×□ We get the feeling there is going to be a lot of serious staring in this one.

“EVERY DECISION COULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES”

you'll know what to expect. Battles look fast and elaborate, with special ability and spell animations showing off some of the more impressive visual elements in the game revealed so far. The PC-only strategy mode from *Dragon Age: Origins* returns, a welcome addition for fans of last year's *XCOM*. Otherwise, combat seems quite familiar.

The keep is defended and the player returns to Crestwood to find the entire village slaughtered. A brief scene shows Varric's grief over the loss of the civilians – it's a bit heavy-handed, but the message is that every decision could have serious consequences.

The scene changes and we move to a new area called the Western Approach, a barren desert that looks like something out of a... well, Western. The BioWare rep takes a moment to show us snowy tundra, misty swamps and more – a promising

variety of environments that seems like a response to the tiny repeated areas of the previous game.

It's here that we learn about keeps. Keeps are strongholds that you raid in order to gain advantages in the surrounding environments. You can approach each in a number of ways – in this case, the player had already poisoned the water supply beforehand and falsely lured out troops to wear down the forces inside. When it comes to getting past the gates, the player can have Varric climb over and open them, use some tunnels beneath to sneak in or Cassandra can smash the gates to pieces and you can charge in the front entrance. Again, plenty of choice.

This also highlights another new feature: destructible environments. The enemy begins to set up ranged attackers in the surrounding area, so the party eliminates supports for a bridge, collapsing it and sending the archers on top to an early grave.



COMPANY LINE

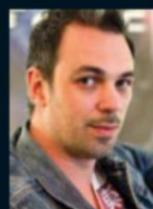
"We've been poring over player feedback from past games and connecting directly with our fans." We'd bloody well hope so after *Dragon Age II*, BioWare...



CAMERON LEE

Q&A

Dragon Age: Inquisition's producer on open worlds and making the jump to PlayStation 4



Is the design of *Dragon Age: Inquisition* a response to the feedback you got on *Dragon Age II*?

We've been fortunate with *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. With the change in generations and the swap to Frostbite we've been able to build everything from the ground up, so everything's rewritten. That was the perfect chance to look at that sort of feedback and respond to it. Having feedback like, 'we want playable races that were missing from *Dragon Age II*'. Well now we've got the time, let's put playable races back in – and you know what? [You can] play as the Qunari as well, which I think is a cool opportunity. Tactical mode is another one. We're missing our top-down tactical mode we had in *Origins*, so let's put it back in. I think it's a good opportunity to look at what people want and respond to that.

Talk to us about next-gen...

We're shipping on five platforms. The difference you're going to see right now is mostly that level of immersion. We can populate the world to a greater degree on next-gen. Saying that, the core experience will be the same. We don't want to limit people just because they haven't bought the new consoles this time round, so we want to make sure you have the same experience across the board, but the next-gen players will have a more detailed experience.

Was the name change from *Dragon Age III* to *Inquisition* an attempt to attract new players?

It's a great question. It's a process of not putting up barriers and that's mostly what it's about – you don't have to dumb down a game, you don't have to make something

simpler. You just have to take some of those barriers away. If you're a new player to this franchise who is uncomfortable immediately using more advanced stuff, you can play through it without that. They don't have to do that. But if they want to, it's there, they can do it. So we're trying to give enough control to satisfy both groups, and then we'll see the new players who come through – they'll start to do things differently, they'll evolve, so for the next game they will be experienced players. The other thing we're doing, with the save import system; again, that is optional. You don't have to bring in your saves and all your decisions from previous games. The game will come up with a default world state and give you a description about what's been going on.

In this high fantasy RPG genre a lot of entries are open-world like *Skyrim* or *The Witcher 3*. Do you think you now have to be open-world to remain competitive?

I don't think so. I think we'll see open-world becoming more of a trend in next-gen anyway, regardless of the genre. *Dragon Age: Inquisition* is more open-world than it has been previously – open-world games tend to be fixed in a theme. We don't want to do that. We want to say, 'we have an open-world game, but you can go and visit the desert', and when you're in a desert, that open-world desert, you feel like you're in a desert. You're not in a little corner in a small desert, it's a big desert. That's the strength of what we're looking at here – we can send the player across the world to all these really diverse areas and have the player feel like they're in those places, while still having that sense of open-world discovery that you have in some of those other open-world games.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

You Tube I refuse to have my heart broken again after the hell that was *DA2*.
BryonRollins

You Tube *Dragon Age II* had its moments, but overall it was broken compared to *Origins*.
acart005

Twitter Playable Qunari? Hell yes.
@Kittle11

Twitter Got to have something to wash out the taste of *Dragon Age II*.
@Musashi1596

Twitter Not really looking forward to it.
@MrWrighty987

Once you claim a keep, it can be customised as you like, focussing it on commerce, espionage, all-out war or something else entirely. Players can assign agents to carry out missions in the surrounding area, similar in a fashion to managing your assassin's guild in *Assassin's Creed*. Completing these can have a number of benefits, even opening up new areas.

The demo ends with an encounter with a ruddy great dragon. It looks amazing, but just as things really get going, the curtain falls. Each dragon is apparently unique, though, which should make taking one down a serious achievement.

Considering *Dragon Age: Inquisition* isn't out until late next year (at the earliest), the fact that BioWare is already showing it off proves it has real confidence in it. With the lessons it has learned and the improvements made, it's easy to see why.

Sam Smith

DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION is being developed by BioWare. Check the website for more details:
www.dragonage.com

ANATOMY OF... DELSIN ROWE

He looks like a tool, but inFamous: Second Son seems like it's going to be pretty fun. We'd better get acquainted with Mr Rowe...

HE'S A POWER SPONGE

Turns out Delsin can absorb the powers of other Conduits and take them for his own – his smoky abilities are merely the first set he attains. We've seen him absorb electricity powers later in the game, and who knows what other stuff he'll be able to do?

Shoot jam out of his nose? Turn into a tree? Control dogs with his mind?

HE'S AN OUTLAW

Delsin is fighting against the fascist government that has taken control of the country since *inFamous 2*. Public opinion of super-powered individuals has soured thanks to all the destruction they tend to leave in their wake, and the powers that be have cracked down on them with extreme prejudice.

HE'S A CONDUIT

So, Cole is out and Delsin is in. Yep, it's a stupid name, and he has the daft beanie to back it up. Delsin is a 24-year-old waster with no direction in life. Coming across a bus crash he attempts to help but comes into contact with a super-powered human known as a Conduit. The experience awakens Delsin's own latent Conduit powers.

HE'S A SMOKER

Delsin's power is initially the ability to control smoke in a variety of not particularly scientific ways. He can shoot molten smoke from his hands, protect himself with a forcefield of ash, heat up a chain to use in melee attacks, float on jets of steam and even teleport, dissipating into smoke before appearing again a short distance away.

ETA FEB 2014 | DEV SUCKER PUNCH | PUB SONY | TWITTER @SUCKERPUNCHPROD

inFamous: Second Son

PS4



PS4

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ETA 2015 | DEV CD PROJEKT RED | PUB TBC | TWITTER @CYBERPUNKGAME

Cyberpunk 2077

The Robot Sex Pistols



IF YOU WERE going to pick a development studio to make a game based on a classic tabletop RPG, which would you choose?

It's a question that had often played in the head of Mike Pondsmith, creator of the beloved game *Cyberpunk 2020*. Over the years, he's had several offers to turn his vision into a digital reality.

"There have been some fairly big players, which non-disclosure agreements do not allow me to discuss," says Pondsmith. "Something always happened to bring the project to a premature end. I remember a memorable case where I loved the prototype, and then the president of the company was drafted and had to go back into the military."

That all changed when Pondsmith received an email from *The Witcher* developer CD Projekt RED, expressing interest in creating a new *Cyberpunk* videogame. "To us it made sense to adapt something that we enjoy playing," explains gameplay designer Damien Monnier. "The world of *Cyberpunk* is so gritty, mature and deadly – it really fits the games we make here at CDPR."

"They were asking me questions about the history of *Cyberpunk 2020*," explains Pondsmith. "It showed they knew their stuff and were not just

slapping a label on it. They have the capability and the desire to do the real thing, as opposed to something that just has our name on it."

It's enough to get existing *Cyberpunk* fans drooling, but those unfamiliar with the RPG or the general concept of cyberpunk might not understand what all the fuss is about. Cyberpunk is a sci-fi sub-genre that originated in the writings of William Gibson and includes films like *Blade Runner* and *Akira*. The general idea is 'high tech and low life' – technology has enabled humanity to do incredible things, but social decay and a huge divide between rich and poor has created a decadent, lawless society rife with crime, narcotics and filthy slums. Human augmentation is standard practice and the line between man and machine becomes more blurred by the day.

The visual style is arresting and evocative of an Eighties vision of the future. Dark cities with towering skyscrapers and terrible overpopulation lit by neon streams and roaming searchlights with the sun never reaching the ground level.

The tabletop RPG is set in 2020, but the upcoming videogame will be in 2077, and working out how things have progressed in the time in-between is one of the biggest challenges for



△×□ *Cyberpunk 2077* screams of *Blade Runner* and the like, something we're very excited about.

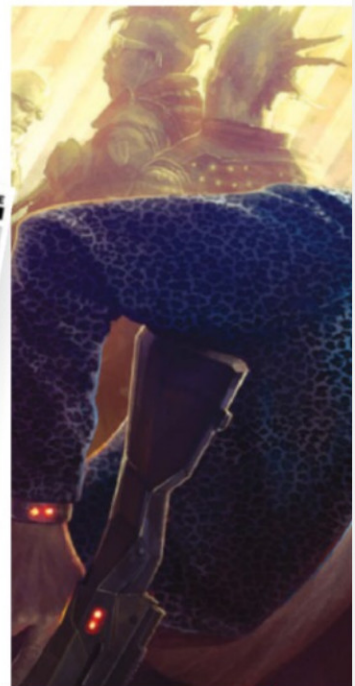
PEN & PAPER Cyberpunk's RPG roots

FANS OF THE original *Cyberpunk 2020* pen and paper role-playing game might be worried that the videogame will lose some of the nuance and complexity that they love about the original. Worry not, fans, as it seems CD Projekt RED loves the original source material just as much as you do. *Cyberpunk 2077*'s mechanics will be inspired by the game system of the original role-playing game, although obviously some changes have to be made for the adaptation.

"The rules of the pen and paper game are great base material for the game, but straight adaptation isn't as simple as it might seem," says lead writer Sebastian

Stepien. "Some skills just cannot work in a videogame setting the same way they did in the original game, so we build prototypes, experiment a little and see what will work."

"All the same, you want to try to stay as close to the original game as possible, since it is the inspiration. We even want to have an option of printing your character sheet from the game. Balancing the game and all of its stats while remaining true to the original handbook is one of the main problems our designers try to solve. And I must say, to this point they have been quite successful."



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Based on one of the best tabletop RPGs we've ever played.



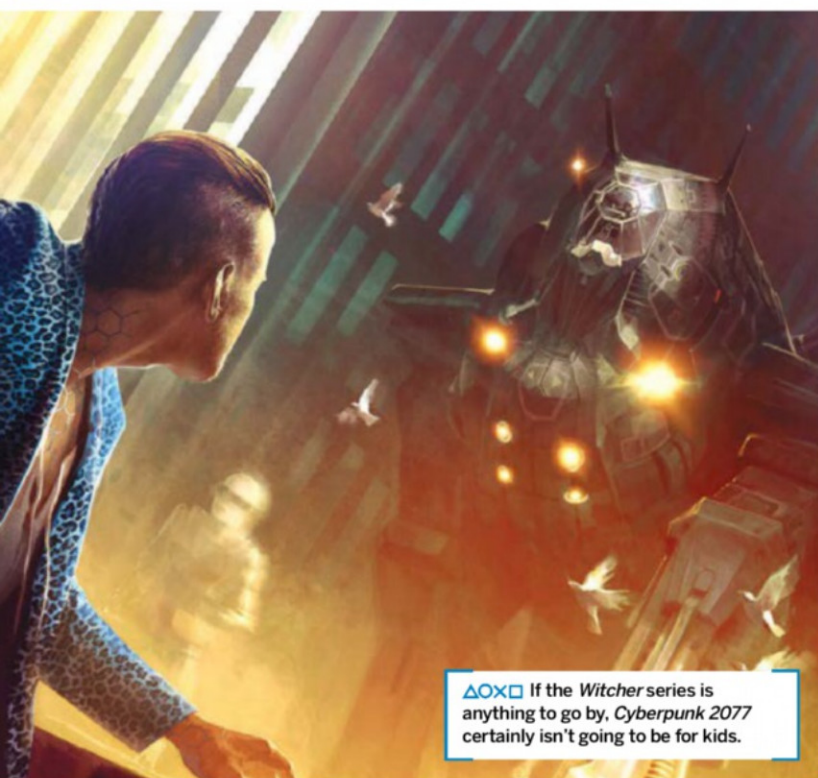
So stylish. We love cyberpunk, and apparently CDPR does too.



Promises of a huge open world with a story full of choices and freedom.



Mike Pondsmith is on board. That dude really knows his stuff.



ΔOXΔ If the *Witcher* series is anything to go by, *Cyberpunk 2077* certainly isn't going to be for kids.

DANCE, BRAIN, DANCE!

Blu-rays are so 2013

CENTRAL TO THE plot of *Cyberpunk 2077* will be new 'Braindance' technology, allowing its users to play recordings of other people's lives and experience everything they see and feel, even including their emotions and sensations. These recordings can vary from adventurers pushing themselves through uncharted landscapes, to a celebrity skiing in Aspen, to illegal, black-market recordings of a serial killer planning a brutal murder or a gang making an example of a shopkeeper late on their protection payments. Overuse of the Braindance tech eventually turns people into drooling wrecks, unable to discern the recordings from reality. It's a fascinating sci-fi concept, and we can't wait to see how it's going to be used in the game further down the line.

Pondsmith and CDPR. Luckily, the series already has a rich history that they can draw from.

"The biggest battle we are having is we have to regress the technology enough to where we wouldn't find a natural process of technological development," says Pondsmith, "Lucky for us, we had a corporate war that damn near destroyed most of the planet." Not only that, but a flood of lethal computer viruses has made it so that people can no longer communicate over the net.

That's all we know so far, with no gameplay to judge and little idea of when to expect the game beyond "2015 at the earliest". The wait might seem long, but CDPR is a developer that we know can make an excellent game. We've waited ages for a great cyberpunk game – we're pretty sure we can wait another couple of years.

Sam Smith

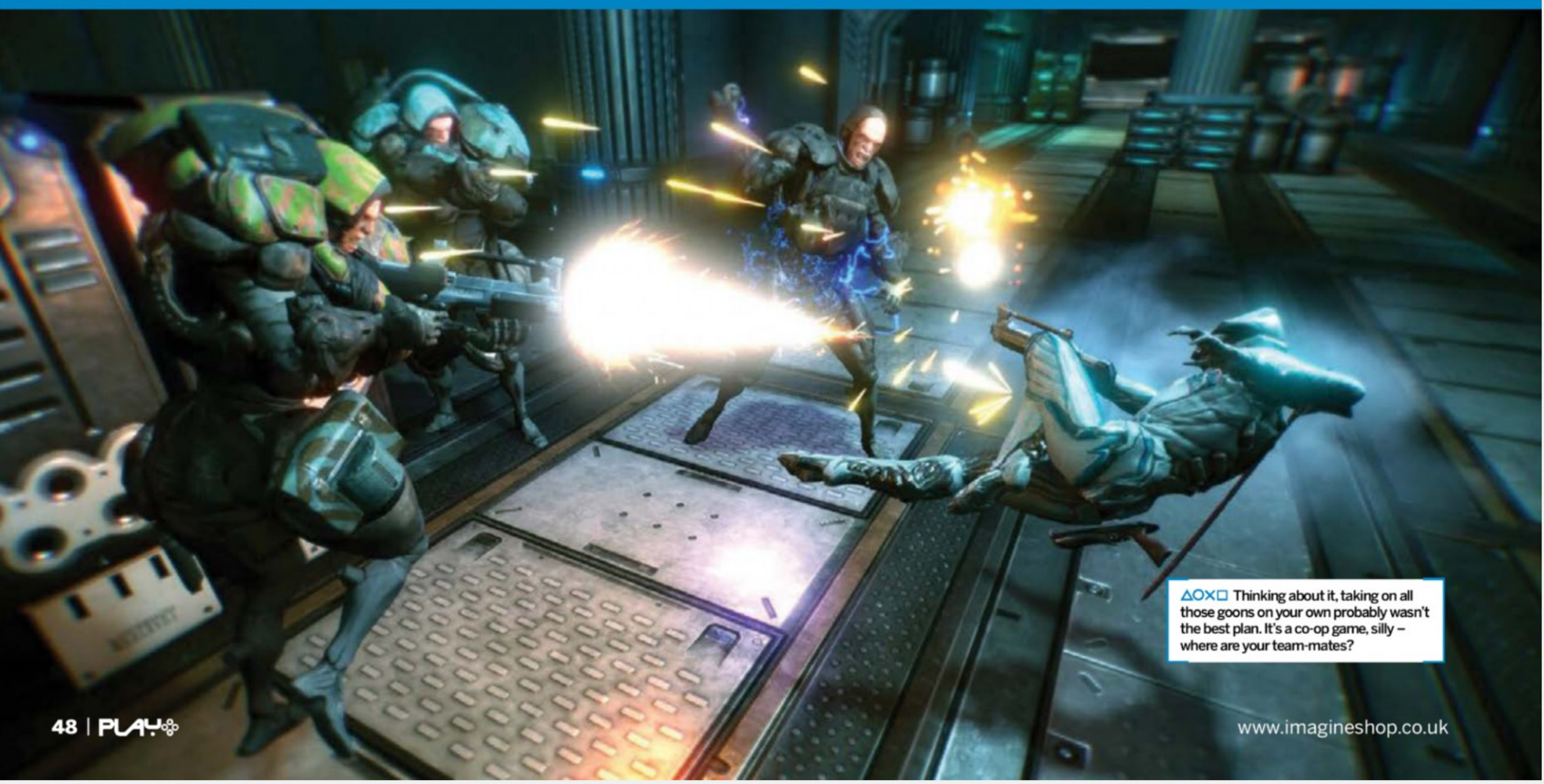
CYBERPUNK 2077 is being developed by CD Projekt RED. Check the website for more details:
www.cyberpunk.net



△○×□ We're not entirely sure what that swirling mess is supposed to be but it sure is pretty. Too bad it's probably going to get blown to bits at some point...

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Co-op play for happy fun-time friendships!
- Loads of cool robot armour suits to try.
- × Tons of different RPG-style abilities.
- It's free!



△○×□ Thinking about it, taking on all those goons on your own probably wasn't the best plan. It's a co-op game, silly – where are your team-mates?



ETA 29 NOVEMBER | DEV DIGITAL EXTREMES | PUB DIGITAL EXTREMES | TWITTER @PLAYWARFRAME

Warframe

Not to be confused with Warface, or War Thunder, or...



THE PS4 MIGHT cost a fair amount, but the savvy consumer might never need to spend a penny on games to play on it. Free-to-play is hitting consoles in a big way, with games like *PlanetSide 2*, *War Thunder* and the already awesome *DC Universe Online*. *Warframe* is coming to PS4 on day one, offering a more cooperative experience than most of these more competitive games.

The story is your standard sci-fi nonsense. Players control members of the Tenno, a race of ancient warriors who have awoken from centuries of cryosleep to find themselves at war with three different factions: the Grineer, a military order of human clones, mega-corporation the Corpus and the Infested, victims of a brain-destroying virus. To fight back, the Tenno used advanced suits of robotic armour known as Warframes.

That's where you come in. This is a co-op game, similar in some ways to *Left 4 Dead* or *Payday 2*. Up to four players work together to complete missions against NPC enemies, from simple exterminations to data retrieval or defending a base. There are a set number of Warframes to choose from, each with four unique abilities. This is where the free-to-play aspect of the game comes into focus. Players will undoubtedly get a few suits to start, but unlocking more will take either a lot of playtime or a bit of real-

life cash money. The suits all have 'cool'-sounding names like NEKROS and VOLT, so 13-year-olds are sure to be in their element.

The abilities these suits bestow are similar in ways to different classes in an RPG. Some Warframes will be suited to offense, while others help defend or heal the party. Some offer melee attacks, others ranged powers and there is enough variety to cover every play style. New suits are being released by Digital Extremes all the time, ensuring a steady stream of new toys for those with enough time or money.

There's a whole bunch of different weapons too, each player equipped with a primary weapon (normally a rifle or shotgun), a secondary weapon (usually a pistol), and a melee weapon like a sword or mace. Again, these can be changed and upgraded. Both weapons and Warframes can be customized with 'mods' and, as players level up their Affinity rank with a particular frame or weapon, it will be able to equip more mods. Yes, it's all a bit of a grind, but this is a free-to-play shooter – what did you expect?

Another big difference between *Warframe* and most other games in the genre is the fact that this is a third-person shooter. The small change in perspective makes a big difference, as movement and traversing the stages plays a large part in gameplay. Players can jump, spring, slide and roll, combining techniques to move about

like a hyperactive ninja while avoiding enemy fire. Characters can also use parkour techniques to bypass obstacles and even reach secret areas. Maps are generated procedurally, with prebuilt rooms connected together so no two levels will have the same layout. Sorry, but you can't just learn where the best spot is on each map and stay there.

An irritating feature of the free-to-play genre rears its ugly head, in the fact that players can only respawn four times a day. After that, it's either time to wait or pony up some dollar and buy yourself some more lives. We don't know how hard the game will be or how often you will die, but considering that the game exists to squeeze money out of you, we'd imagine you better be careful. Think of it as a modern version of old arcade games, designed to get you pumping your pound coins into the machine so you can keep playing.

Ignore the generic name and *Warframe* looks like fun. If it can tap into the co-op chaos that made *Left 4 Dead* and *Borderlands* so much fun and avoid the pitfalls of requiring loads of money to play properly, we could have a new co-op favourite on our hands.

Sam Smith

WARFRAME is being developed by Digital Extremes. Check the website for more details:
www.warframe.com

Instant Expert

EPIC LOOT

Players will be able to use a variety of near-future military technology, from holographic maps to scanners, drones and grenades that roll along the ground towards their target. Players can customise their 'go-bag' and the supplies within, changing their loadout and choosing from thousands of weapon types, skill combinations and gear.

ALWAYS ON

The Division looks to mix a deep campaign with an always-online world and constant player interaction – a goal similar to that of *Destiny*. The concept Ubisoft has put forward has groups of players all carrying out their own missions in the same world. One group's actions might affect another, and so on. If it works, it sounds incredibly compelling.

DIVIDE & CONQUER

Players control an agent in *The Division*, a classified unit of self-supported tactical agents that are activated as a last resort to quell the chaos. Division agents lead seemingly ordinary lives until needed and are trained to operate independently of command, if such a thing is necessary. This is a *Tom Clancy* game, after all.

NEXT-GEN

Of all the games we've seen that are coming to PS4, few exemplify the power and possibilities of the next generation like *The Division*. This is an online multiplayer shooter with RPG elements, with a persistent world and serious repercussions for player actions. It's not quite an MMO, but it's similar.

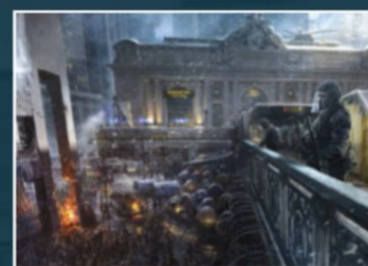
TAKE YOUR TABLETS

Even friends not on PS4 can join in via smartphone or tablet, controlling a military drone and attacking from above to help out. The multimedia approach seems increasingly common going into next-gen, so expect to see loads more games offering this kind of interesting functionality.

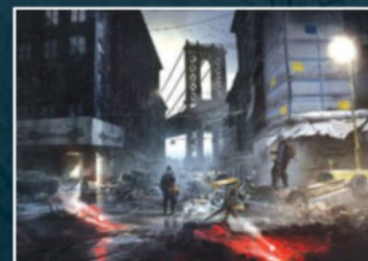
ARE WE DONE WITH COVER SHOOTERS?



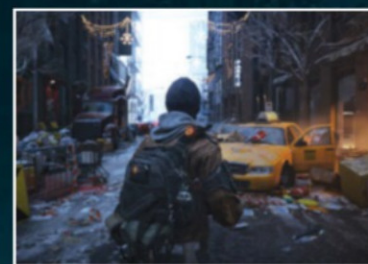
The Division has a lot of interesting ideas, but at its core it remains the same third-person shooter we've been playing for years. Since *Gears Of War* defined cover mechanics in a third-person game, the genre has seen similar gameplay concepts across a huge number of games.



Is this a bad thing? Not really, as long as the template is used as a starting point to build from. Early FPS games were once called "Doom clones", an unfair comparison but proof that the shadow of a genre-defining game will hang over other games for a long time.



So, *The Division* looks to be the same cover-shooting business we've been doing for years, mixed with some of the RPG elements of *Mass Effect*. It's very easy to dismiss it already, but to do so would be a disservice to the developer.



It's hard to be original in a world ruled by profit margins, and a company like Ubisoft is going to want its games to appeal to the broadest audience possible. *The Division* might stick to a template we've seen already, but that doesn't mean it will lack originality – far from it. This looks to be one of the most legitimately next-gen games we've seen so far.

Answer: Not just yet.

ETA: 2014 | DEV: UBISOFT MASSIVE | PUB: UBISOFT | TWITTER: @THEDIVISIONGAME

Tom Clancy's The Division



A post-apocalypse without zombies – we know, it's crazy

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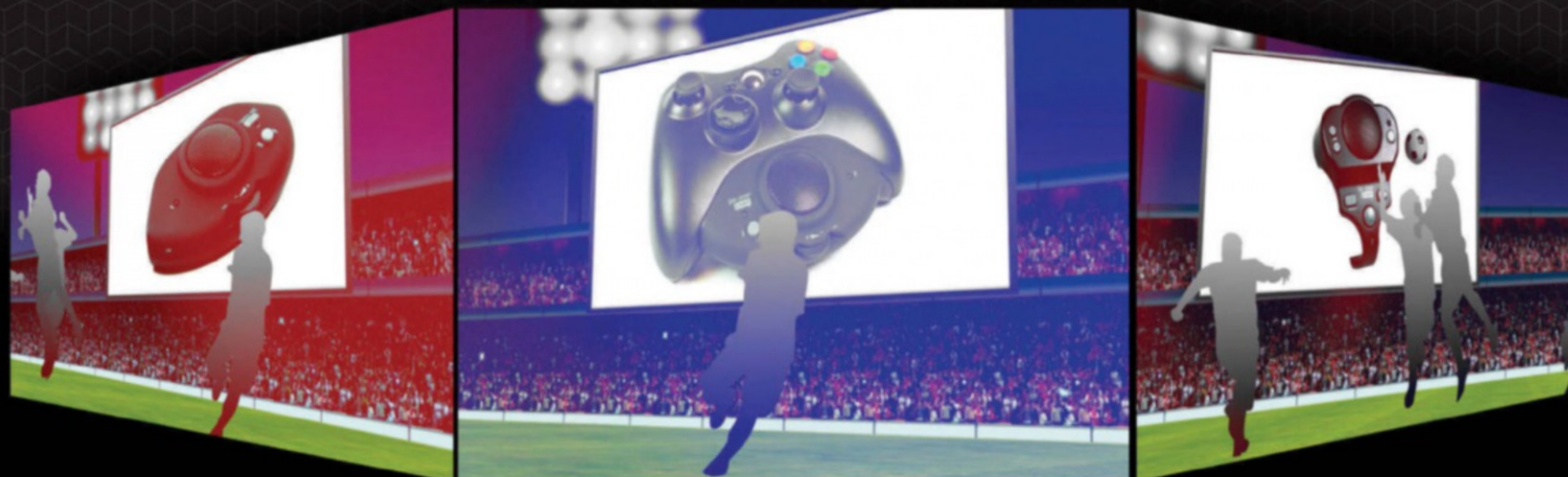
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PREVIEW ROUND-UP



A rundown of all the amazing stuff we didn't quite have room for elsewhere but that still deserves a spot in the mag. We've got something for everyone, unless you hate fun. You don't hate fun, do you?

PS4



GUILTY GEAR XRD -SIGN-

ANOTHER FIGHTER FROM Arc System Works, as the studio returns to the franchise that made it famous. Sol Badguy, Ky Kiske and all your other favourites are back and rocking some of the most beautiful graphics we've ever seen. Cel-shaded 3D models that look more 2D than a lot of 2D games, it's utterly stunning in motion. It's coming to PS3 and PS4, hopefully at some point in 2014 after the arcade version hits in Japan.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2014

PS3



PERSONA 4 THE ULTIMAX ULTRA SUPLEX HOLD

PERSONA 4 ARENA is one of our favourite fighting games of recent years, and after being received well across the world, it's not surprising a sequel is on the way. Adding *Persona* 3 characters Junpei and Yukari as well as mysterious newcomer Sho Minazuki, the

story picks up after the end of the first game and looks even crazier than before. Appealing to both fighting game enthusiasts and *Persona* fans, this will be coming to PS3 at some point. Now Atlus is under new ownership, we might even get it on time too!

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014

PS3



SAINT SEIYA BRAVE SOLDIERS

THE CLASSIC MANGA series gets a new game, exclusive to PS3. Sure, most gamers will never even have heard of it, but *Saint Seiya*'s breed of superhero theatrics and punching dudes in the face really hard should appeal to most fight fans. It's worth a look if you fancy wandering off the beaten path and trying something niche. After all, who doesn't enjoy pulling fabulous poses before performing acts of super-violence?

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2013

PS4



WATCH DOGS

SHORTLY BEFORE GOING to press, news broke of Ubisoft's next-gen centrepiece *Watch Dogs* being delayed until Spring 2014. It's kind of a big deal, as many people were planning on picking up the game with their launch console. Still, delays might hurt now but they tend to pay off in the long run in the form of a more polished, less buggy game for us all to enjoy. The wait just became a little longer for *Watch Dogs*, but it will likely be worth it in the end. Keep on keeping on, Ubisoft. End's in sight!

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2014

PS3



XCOM: ENEMY WITHIN

ONE OF THE best games of last year (and easily the hardest) gets a standalone expansion pack that adds even more nail-bitingly tense battles against the invading extraterrestrial threat. You don't need the original (though shame on you if you don't own it anyway) to enjoy the 40 new maps, new soldier classes and new ways to upgrade your troops into battle-hardened murder machines. Apparently it's even harder too... if you need us, we'll be cowering under our beds. Crying.

RELEASE DATE: 15 NOVEMBER



DAYZ

THE PC PHENOMENON that started as a mod of *Arma II* continues to slowly become a full game in its own right, and creator Dean Hall has repeatedly spoken of bringing his brainchild to console. Survive in a world of the dead where other players are often the more dangerous foe, scavenging food, ammunition and medical supplies to make it through another day. Stressful as it is, it's great fun. Remember: trust no one, and we mean NO ONE. Betray them before they can do the same to you.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

CD PROJEKT RED'S finale to its *Witcher* trilogy is still on the way, it still looks great and it's still got the potential to be the greatest open-world fantasy RPG we've ever seen. With a map "30 times larger" than previous games in the series, there's little doubt that there will be plenty to do. The same mature storytelling CDPR is known for, mixed with an open world bigger than *Skyrim's* – it's a winning combo. Get those pre-orders in now, people.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2014



SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

FINALLY. FINALLY, WE have a release date for the oft-delayed *South Park* game. With Trey Parker and Matt Stone on board, hopes are high that *The Stick Of Truth* might be the first *South Park* game to truly capture the irreverent humour and satire of the show. The game is in good hands, being developed by Obsidian Entertainment, a studio that has worked on *Fallout* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* – this is a team that knows how to make an RPG.

RELEASE DATE: 13 DECEMBER



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

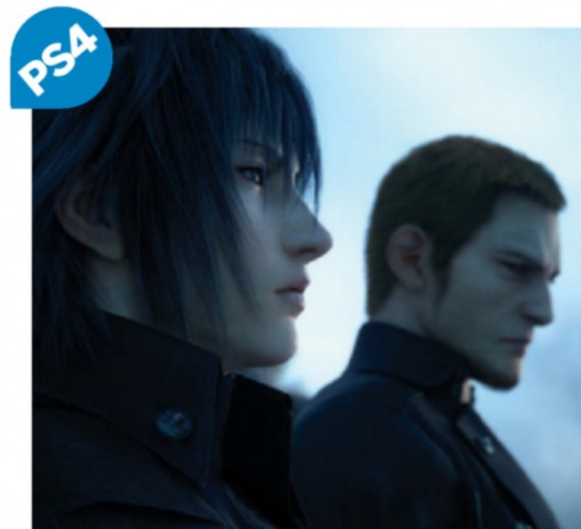
WE CAN'T FORGET about one of the biggest games on the horizon – the return of Snake in *Metal Gear Solid V*. Players once again control Big Boss in a game that spans two different sections. We don't yet know if the two will be separate releases or one big whole, but they form two parts of one larger story.

Ground Zeroes takes place in 1975, with Snake infiltrating a rain-soaked military base to rescue allies from *Peace Walker*. Something goes wrong and the guy ends up in a coma for the next nine years. When

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2014

he wakes, *The Phantom Pain* begins, Snake being tasked with a new mission in the Middle East to get revenge for... well, whatever actually happened.

Fans might be hesitant to accept changes, but fear not, because the *Metal Gear* heart seems to be beating through as hard as ever. This is still a Hideo Kojima game, and characters called things like Skull Face and Code Talker ensure no one is ever going to mistake it for Shakespeare. It's coming to PS3 and PS4, but we don't know when. Soon, hopefully.



FINAL FANTASY XV

IT'S STILL ON the way, it still looks insane and we still can't wait for it. The game formally known as *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* is back with a new name but with just as many emo teenagers tasked with saving the world. Between the incredibly impressive trailers and some intriguing new battle systems, we are hoping *Final Fantasy XV* is the breath of fresh air the series desperately needs. The relatively realistic setting mixed with the classic magic we all know and love creates a unique and interesting setting.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2014

GAME CHANGERS

TEN MOMENTS THAT DEFINED A GENERATION

SEPTEMBER 2010

PlayStation Move

Motion control done right

■ SO, BY THIS point the Wii had already introduced gaming to a whole generation of people who didn't like or play games before. With that market worth millions, it's hardly surprising that Sony wanted a slice of it. While the wave of mini-game collections and shovelware that came along with Move's arrival will have been familiar to anyone that followed the release of the Wii, Sony's tech was that much more impressive – closer to 1:1 accuracy than even a MotionPlus-upgraded Wii Remote, Move offered more precise control than both the everyman motion control of Wii and the ham-fisted 'not yet, guys' tech demo that is Kinect. The games seldom reflected this, but those that did and do really stand out. Move is and was impressive, so we're delighted to see it return both in wand form and in every DualShock 4 controller, ready to showcase its precision for the world to see.



“WE’RE DELIGHTED TO SEE MOVE RETURN IN WAND FORM AND IN EVERY DUALSHOCK 4”



NOVEMBER 2007

COD 4: Modern Warfare changes multiplayer

Infinity Ward completely rewrites the rules of engagement

■ **BELIEVE IT OR** not, multiplayer games didn't always have XP, levelling, loadouts, Killcams and Prestiging. No, it was *COD* that brought these elements together first in this seminal shooter, and while many have tried to replicate the formula (including Activision itself), it's fair to say that few have even come close. Multiplayer, formerly a casual afterthought in even major releases, was given purpose and longevity, an awesome competitive suite made all the more compelling by the perfect combination of great design, skill-based play and rewards. These days, if you play an online game that doesn't keep track of how much XP you're earning, it probably came out before *Modern Warfare*. In which case, we're surprised the servers are still live.



JUNE 2009

Borderlands gets a makeover

Don't worry - your opinion still matters

■ **TRY AS HE** might, Randy Pitchford just couldn't sell the world on *Borderlands*. Back at E3 2008, the game was shown off as a gritty, realistic and, most of all, brown FPS – while many of the concepts that would make the final product were already there, none of the style or character was. It was just another brown shooter. And the media reported on that – it was just another brown shooter. Focus groups relayed the same message to Gearbox as websites, magazines and forum posters had been saying all along – as good as the ideas may have been, it just looked too much like one big long brown yawn of a game for anyone to give a shit. Cue an 11th hour crisis meeting and one of the speediest redesigns we've ever seen, the game emerging after lord-knows-how-many all-nighters as one of the most stylish and characterful shooters on the market. See? Developers do listen...



DECEMBER 2007

PixelJunk leads the indies

The age of the bedroom developers begins...

■ **AS DEVELOPMENT COSTS** on big-budget games continue to snowball, it's little surprise that many creative sorts are choosing to make their ideas into gaming realities with as few overheads as possible. The arthouse flicks to the Hollywood blockbusters that roll off the Activision or EA production lines, low-key releases have become more and more popular in recent years – the likes of *Braid*, *Minecraft* and *Super Meat Boy* had fewer

people work on them than *Assassin's Creed IV* did *entire studios*. After years of bombast, it's refreshing to see creativity showcased and, while these don't tend to be the prettiest games on the market, most come from creators smart enough to know that style counts for a lot. To see games like *Octodad* and *Don't Starve* showcased alongside *inFamous* and *Killzone* delights us like you can't imagine – long live the indie revolution!





JANUARY 2009

Trophies become mandatory

It don't mean a thing if you ain't got that bling

■ **IF YOU'D HAVE** told us ten years ago that we'd one day care about how many pretend digital bits of silverware we had in a virtual cabinet, we'd have laughed you all the way back to the Dreamcast. But while we might not be the most dedicated Trophy chasers in all the land, there's still a certain buzz that goes along with that little pop-up. Mundane tasks still pop up on Trophy

lists more often than we'd like, but good devs are as smart with their Trophies as they are with their game design, using the virtual awards to promote entirely new ways to play games and get even more enjoyment out of them. Gone are the days of some games having Trophies and others going without – it's a must these days, although not all games offer a Platinum for scoring the rest.



OCTOBER 2009

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves amazes

PS3's technical superiority made crystal clear by Naughty Dog

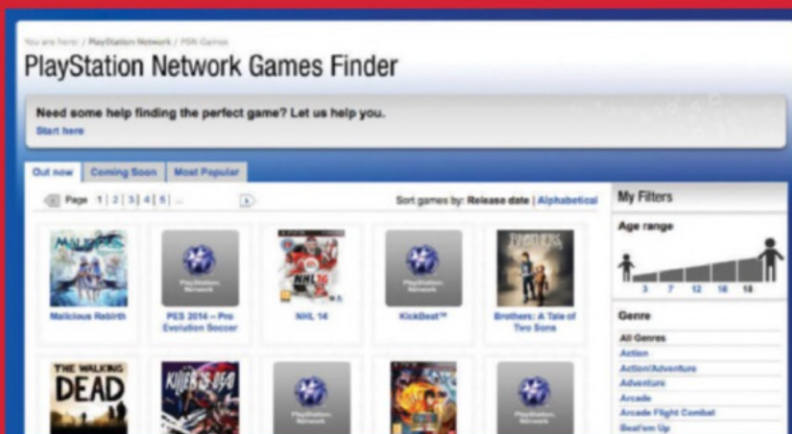
■ **FOR ALL THE** pre-launch power struggle between Xbox 360 and PS3, the first few years of games made it seem like the two platforms were on a pretty even pegging. Those of us in the loop knew this was largely due to multi-platform games developed for the lowest common denominator and first-party teams learning the complex new PS3 hardware, but it was Naughty Dog that first demonstrated the difference in power between the two consoles with this incredible sequel. And for all the great exclusives on both systems, Sony's have been a nose ahead in terms of visuals and presentation ever since. The cinematic action of Drake's trilogy, the ambition of the later *Resistance* games, the ever-impressive aesthetics of *Killzone*... PlayStation exclusives have been the real lookers for years now (culminating in *The Last Of Us* and *Beyond*, which simply couldn't be done on 360), and that's not something that's going to change with PS4 the clear next-gen leader on paper.

JUNE 2010

PlayStation Plus begins

Pay a little, get a lot

■ **WHEN IT WAS** first announced, many people thought that Plus was nothing more than a belated, lazy response to Microsoft's Xbox Live Gold subscription model, but it turned out to be something way bigger. Online play on PlayStation 3 and Vita would remain free, with Plus fees instead going towards additional services and extras – early beta access to big games, a decent chunk of cloud storage for game saves and, most appealing of all, the Instant Game Collection. With a new batch of triple-A games available free to Plus members every month, your annual subscription (or shorter, if you'd rather) basically got you a year's worth of games for the price of one. And while cynics were quick to jump on the fact that online play would require Plus membership on PS4, those of us who have had that little plus symbol by our PSN names since the beginning probably can't imagine their gaming lives without it anyway. The likes of *Contrast* and *Resogun* free from day one on PS4? Don't mind if we do...





MAY 2013

Dust 514 kickstarts F2P

The free-to-play model comes to console

■ **MOBILE DEVELOPERS HAVE** long known that you can make a fortune by giving your games away for nothing, but this business model is only now starting to make its way onto consoles. It's simple enough in theory – the core game is free, with access to certain gear or play time restricted in some way. Grind or spend

is the choice presented to anyone that cares enough to persist and, as devs have learned, more than enough players are lazy enough to choose 'spend' to make this model pretty damn profitable. Disappointing shooter *Dust 514* takes the honour of being first on PS3 to adopt a free-to-play model, but it didn't have the park

to itself for long – *Dead Or Alive 5* recently got a F2P version while Namco Bandai already has *Tekken Revolution* out there, with *Ridge Racer*, *SoulCalibur* and *Ace Combat* freebies all in the pipeline. F2P is going to be huge on PS4 by the sounds of things, so just do yourself a favour and be nice to your credit cards...

JUNE 2010

PSN hacked

A wake-up call for Sony's digital security team

■ **WHILE HAVING ALL** of the old PS3 models get confused about leap years was pretty embarrassing for Sony, this gaffe was on a whole different level. Digital intruders attacked its online network, with outages followed by several weeks of downtime while Sony went to work on reinforcing its security. Originally, it was suggested that a vast amount of personal data of PSN users had been compromised, though it later emerged that much of the info was encrypted. All the same, the slip-up proved revelatory to Sony and, as terrible a mistake as it was, the honesty with which the aftermath was handled was impressive. Security is now improved – music to our ears with digital growth continuing – but just don't do it again, yeah?



FEBRUARY 2012

PlayStation Vita arrives

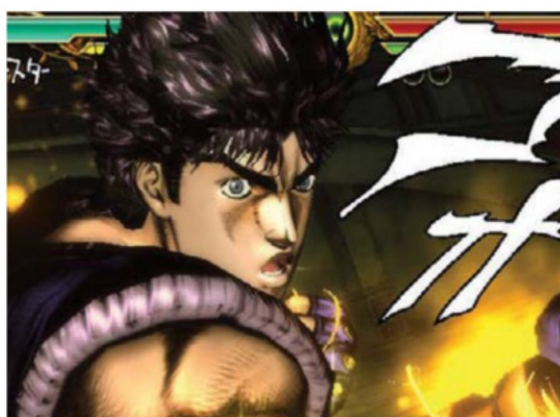
Bridging the handheld/mobile divide

■ **WITH NINTENDO STILL** dominating the handheld market, it was either insane certainty or certain insanity for Sony to launch Vita; ostensibly a home console in handheld form. While the hardware looks and feels worthy of its price tag, proprietary memory and games designed around the potentially outdated notion that people want portable games to look and play like their console counterparts made for a rough start. Almost two years on and with a catalogue of awesome games and a more reasonable price, Vita is coming into its own. Free-to-play games, indie darlings and triple-A brands alike continue to warm to Vita, while the launch of PS4 gives it its greatest selling point yet – the ability to remotely play your entire PS4 game library. Vita might have seemed like a blinkered and naive play by Sony, but it was actually one of the most forward-thinking tech releases in recent memory.



TOP TEN GAMES WE CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY

THERE ARE ALWAYS GREAT GAMES ON THE HORIZON TO GET EXCITED FOR; IT'S ONE OF THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING A GAMER. HERE ARE TEN TITLES WE CAN'T WAIT TO GET OUR SWEATY HANDS ALL OVER



JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE: ALL STAR BATTLE

1 You might not have heard of it, but when we learnt recently that JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle was coming to the West, we let out a battle cry of joy. JJBA is one of the most beloved manga series in Japan, but little Western exposure left us doubtful the game was ever coming here. Namco Bandai has done the impossible and confirmed that the PS3 exclusive will indeed be coming here in 2014. Fans of the manga will be suitably excited, as the game looks like one huge bundle of fan service wrapped up in some seriously stylish graphics.



GUILTY GEAR XRD -sign-

6 We've been waiting for what feels like forever for a new Guilty Gear. Arc System Works' spiritual sequel BlazBlue has helped fill the void, but after several years there is finally a Sol Badguy-shaped light at the end of the tunnel. Series creator Daisuke Ishiwatari is once again directing, as well as creating the awesome soundtrack. Most exciting are the phenomenal graphics; a mixture of 2D and 3D with clever toon shading that is unlike anything we have ever seen. Characters appear 2D, only for the camera to pan around and show off the three-dimensional glory.



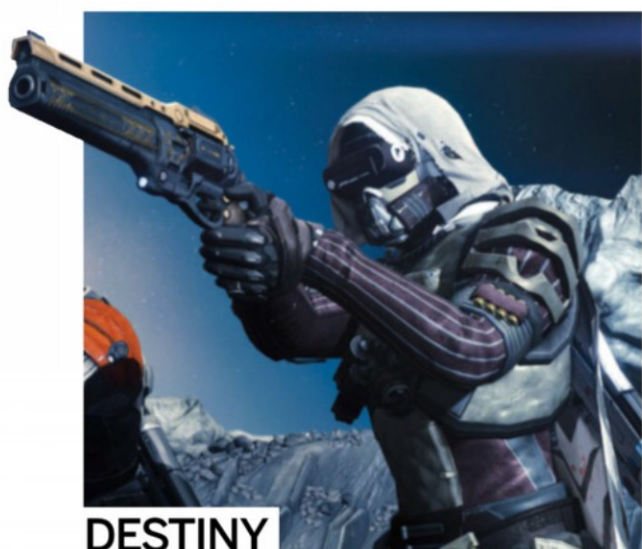
METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

2 It's been a long wait, but it's finally almost time for Snake to make his return. This time it's Naked Snake, Punished Snake, Big Boss... whatever Kojima feels like calling him today. It's another prequel set in the Eighties that looks set to round off the series nicely. A new open-world setting, complete with vehicles, animals and more ways than ever to be sneaky make this a true step forward for the series as it enters the next generation. Plus, it's guaranteed to have nanomachines and giant robots in it – as clear a sign as any that you are onto a winner.



DARK SOULS II

7 Surprise surprise, we are talking about *Dark Souls* again. Regular **Play** readers will know by now that we really like *Dark Souls*, and as such it makes sense that we would be very excited for the sequel. After some initial worries, everything we've seen of it fills us with warm, reassuring confidence that everything we loved about the first *Dark Souls* will be returning here. It's going to be rock hard, hauntingly beautiful and full of mysterious secrets. Plus, invading other people's games with the sole purpose of ruining their lives never fails to put smiles on our faces.



DESTINY

3 Halo might have never seen a Sony console, but we love the series regardless (yep, we play other things) and have been huge Bungie fans for years. So when we hear they are making a new “shared-world experience” (read: MMO) sci-fi FPS we get bloody excited. *Destiny* sounds like a mixture of *Halo*, *Borderlands* and *World Of Warcraft*, and if that doesn’t sound awesome to you, you need to get your priorities straight. We can see ourselves playing nothing but *Destiny* for years, and Bungie is excellent at providing post-release content.



FINAL FANTASY XV

4 The glory days of Final Fantasy may be long gone but the name still carries a huge amount of weight, and a new instalment in the main series is always a big deal. The game formerly known as *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* has burst back onto the scene with some seriously impressive trailers, and for the first time in a long while we are excited for *Final Fantasy* again. Of course, we’ve been let down before, so more fool us, but we really are hoping that this one will be the game to recapture some of that old Squaresoft magic.



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

5 More DICE, the guys responsible for a little series called *Battlefield*. Long have people dreamed of a *Star Wars: Battlefront* game developed by DICE, and now, thanks to the death of LucasArts and EA picking up the licence, the dream is a reality. All the epic vehicular madness of *Battlefield* combined with the glory of *Star Wars*... it’s a formula that the previous *Battlefront* games have aped relatively well, but who better to make a game like *Battlefront* than the guys who make *Battlefield*? It’s not coming until at least 2015, but we can wait. It’ll be worth it.



CYBERPUNK 2077

8 A healthy early-Nineties upbringing of *Blade Runner*, *Akira* and other cheap anime videotapes has instilled in us a love of the cyberpunk setting that continues on to this day. *The Witcher* developer CD Projekt RED is bringing *Cyberpunk* back with a game based on the tabletop RPG created by Mike Pondsmith. The fact that Pondsmith is on board working every step of the way with CDPR to make the new game is great news for fans, and the teaser trailers we’ve seen so far are just as moody, dark and neon-soaked as we expected. Hook it up to our veins.



MIRROR'S EDGE 2

9 The first *Mirror's Edge* was undoubtedly flawed, but also a beautiful, unique experience that offered free-running gameplay unlike anything we’ve seen before or since. The environment design was stunning, a dystopian city kept so clean as to be sterile, with solid whites, reds and oranges as far as the eye can see. We’ve been waiting the best part of a generation for a new game, and all hope seemed lost for several years. We shouldn’t have worried, as DICE is bringing Faith back in an open-world prequel for next-gen consoles. Hooray!



THE ORDER: 1886

10 After pumping out *God Of War* games for a decade, it’s nice to see Sony Santa Monica move into new IP for the new generation. Developed primarily by Ready At Dawn, the two studios will be collaborating on what looks to be a great new PS4 exclusive. Set in a historical London with more fantastical elements, players control an order of knights who protect the innocent from spooky things that go bump in the night. Seeing Sony committed to new exclusives is great, and considering the teams behind it, *The Order* could turn out really well.

PS4

AN INDIE PARADISE

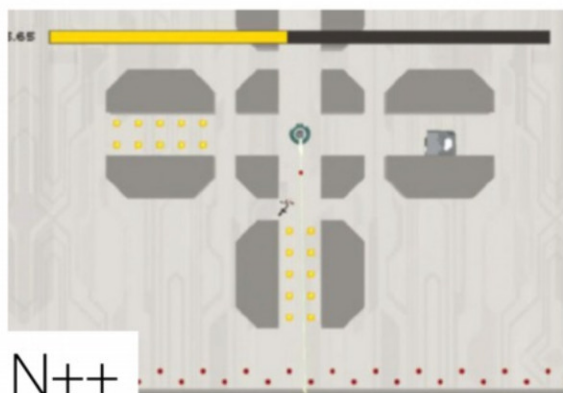
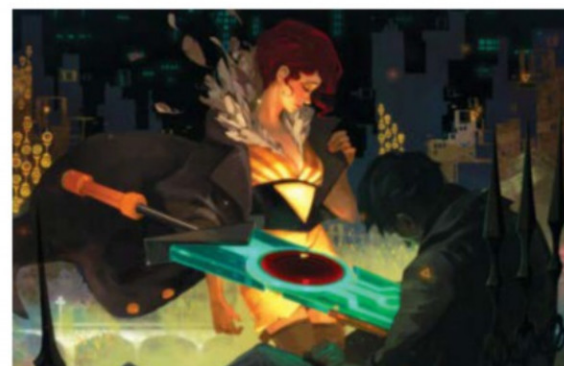
The next-gen war won't just be fought on familiar terms. No, a major new factor will be seeing where the gaming world's indie talent lines up and right now, Sony is attracting the lion's share of the talent. Here are just a few of the awesome indie games in development for **PlayStation 4** as you read these very words...

TRANSISTOR

ETA: Q1 2014

Supergiant Games has only made one game so far, but the critical and commercial success of debut *Bastion* has already cemented the studio as one of the best in the indie business. With narrated fantasy adventure *Bastion* picking up top scores and numerous awards as well as shifting over two million copies, all eyes fall on follow-up, *Transistor* – a game with huge shoes to fill.

Casting players as the unique combination of silent heroine and talking sword (who is voiced by *Bastion*'s narrator, Logan Cunningham), it's another inventive twist on action-RPG conventions. Blending real-time and turn-based elements to create something fresh, it's an awesome system that really does the stunning visuals justice. Expect much more on this bad boy next issue...



N++

ETA: Q4 2013

Okay, so this is about as hardcore as platform games get. If you're into super-tough platform games, that's probably all you need to hear to get you excited about *N++*. Otherwise, all you need to know is that you should be afraid. The original *N* was a browser game with the power to destroy lives and dreams. The enhanced sequel, *N+*, appeared on 360 and smashed faces. We dare not think about what horrors this ultimate version could be capable of. Pre-order a hospital bed now.



OCTODAD:
DADLIEST CATCH

ETA: Q2 2014

Take control of an octopus trying to pass himself off as a human father in this, one of our most anticipated PS4 indies. The most ingenious element of the game is the way it intentionally makes the titular people-poser incredibly hard to control – you'll inevitably end up flapping and flailing all over the place, knocking things over and generally causing hilarious mayhem. The PC version of the original game can be downloaded and played for free, if you want an early taster.



DON'T
STARVE

ETA: Q1 2014

Klei Entertainment – the team behind the superb *Shank* games – tries its hand at something a little different, namely a game where basic survival is just about as good as it gets. With a large amount of indie games going down the bright and colourful route, this bleak and melancholic adventure stands out brilliantly. We've played it on PC and think that it's ace, so we can't wait to get our hands on the PlayStation 4 version. Even if it is bloody miserable.



THE WITNESS

ETA: Q2 2014

Jonathan Blow shot to fame after *Braid* became the poster game for the indie uprising and this is his new project, a free-roaming puzzle game that reminds us quite a lot of classics like *Myst*. The colourful style is a breath of fresh air and the puzzles themselves are creative and clever, making for a game that makes you feel smart whenever you come good with a solution.



SAMURAI GUNN

ETA: Q2 2014

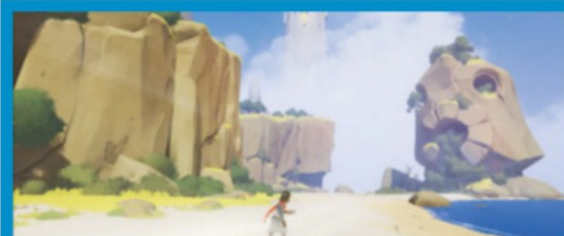
We're not sure how well this simple competitive action game will work in single-player but as a multiplayer experience, it's like digital crack. Samurai showdowns are over in a flash, but rivalries and grudges linger far longer – you'll want revenge whenever you get sliced in the back from a bamboo thicket and want to keep your streak going when you hack through every other ronin going...



VOLUME

ETA: Q3 2014

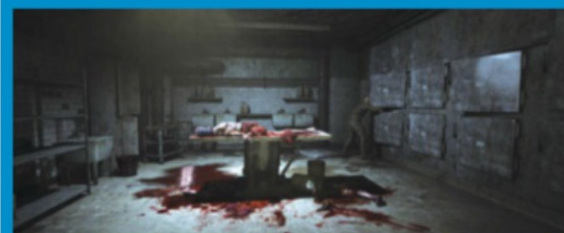
Mike Bithell seems to think he nailed the platform genre with *Thomas Was Alone* (we disagree) as he's moving onto stealth next. Gone is the minimalist style and tiresome genre satire in favour of pure gameplay – stealth is notoriously hard to do well so we hope Bithell has more of a natural affinity for it than he did for platforming. Still, the focus on audio mechanics sounds interesting.



RIME

ETA: Q3 2014

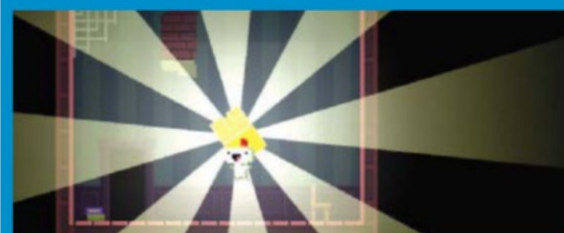
Looking like some glorious cross between *Journey*, *Ico* and *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, Tequila Works' new adventure is an easy hype train to board based on sublime art style alone. Does it bother us that we know nothing about what the game actually is, what you do or how it plays? Does it hell – just look at it.



OUTLAST

ETA: Q1 2014

First-person horror has been all the rage since *Amnesia* and *Slender* made it the indie genre du jour. This survival game has been well-received on PC already and, given the popularity of FPS games on consoles, this sub-genre of horror games is a perfect fit. Actually, we're surprised *Amnesia* isn't coming to PS4. Yet...



FEZ

ETA: Q1 2014

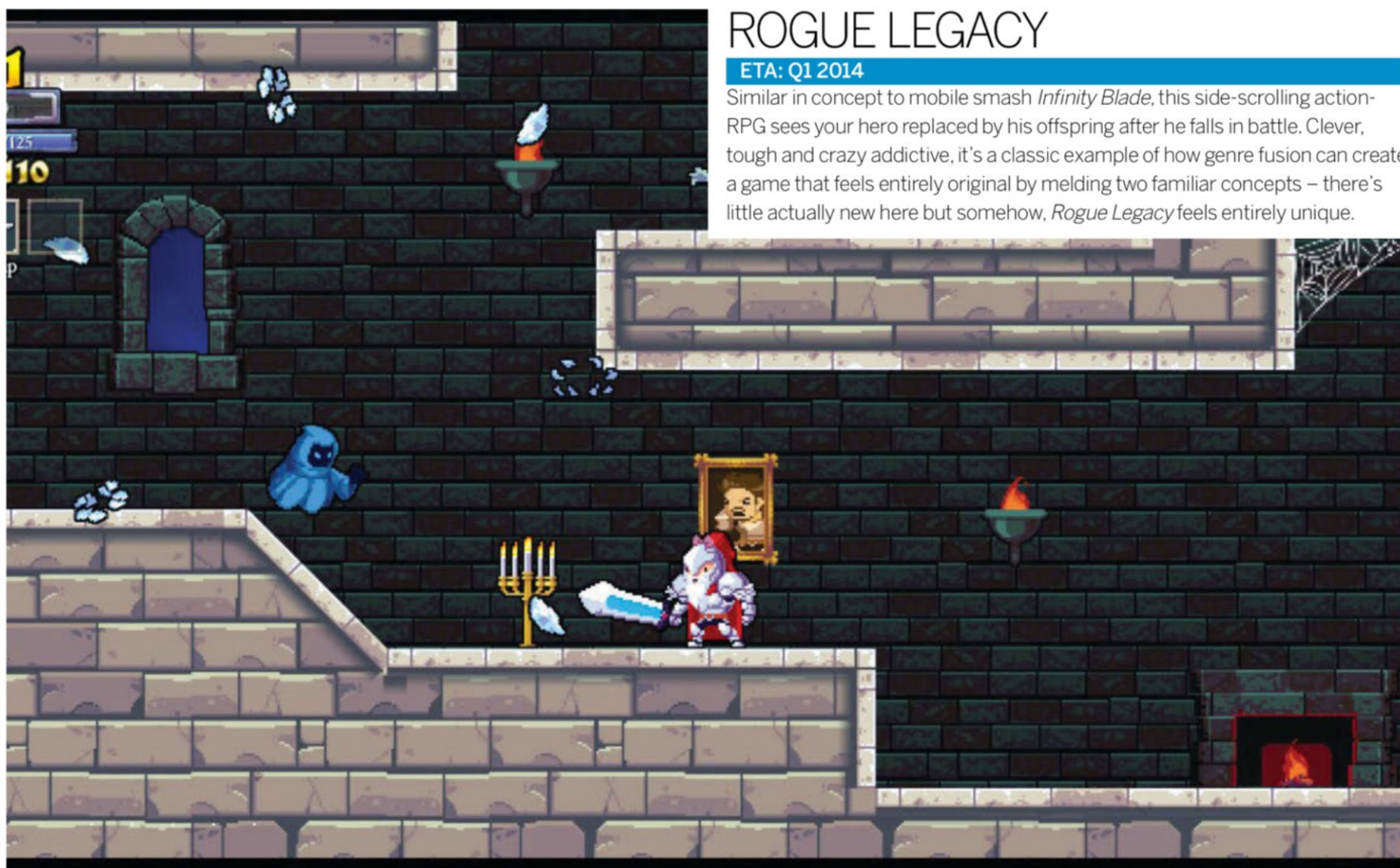
Polytron's puzzle game has been out for some time on 360 and, while we're unlikely to see much visual improvement, we're excited to have it melt our brains all over again. Creator Phil Fish threw his toys out of the pram after a Twitter spat and retired from development – play *Fez* and you'll know how much of a shame that is.



HELLDIVERS

ETA: Q1 2014

A top-down multiplayer shooter that has attracted attention from Sony itself, this tight and competitive action game has us interested. There'll be no concerns about the player base either thanks to Cross-Play.



ROGUE LEGACY

ETA: Q1 2014

Similar in concept to mobile smash *Infinity Blade*, this side-scrolling action-RPG sees your hero replaced by his offspring after he falls in battle. Clever, tough and crazy addictive, it's a classic example of how genre fusion can create a game that feels entirely original by melding two familiar concepts – there's little actually new here but somehow, *Rogue Legacy* feels entirely unique.



EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE

ETA: Q3 2014

A first-person action game with a focus on story over everything else, *Everybody's Gone To The Rapture*, like its forerunner *Dear Esther*, is a classic example of the freedom indie developers have to push boundaries and explore new styles. It might not be a game in the purest sense of the word, but if you're the kind of person that likes to champion games as an art form, you need this.

RAY'S THE DEAD

ETA: Q1 2014

Zombies famously make any game about nine times better, so this odd RTS thing is off to a good start. With the power to convert other zombies to your cause (whatever your cause actually is), it's a case of recruiting other deadites and using them as your own rotting makeshift army. Which sounds like a lot of fun to us.



SECRET PONCHOS

ETA: Q1 2014

Its structure might make it seem more like an F2P mobile game but *Secret Ponchos* has more than enough depth to make it as a console release. It's a multiplayer action game where your team of cowboys takes on the world, one showdown at a time.





MERCENARY KINGS

ETA: Q1 2014

Metal Slug meets *Borderlands* in this awesome side-scrolling shooter where you get to create your own guns. And as if that weren't enough, it's open-world too. The PC version hit Steam Early Access a little while ago and is going down a storm but, with local multiplayer options and console sensibilities galore, it's the kind of game that will really benefit from a PS4 showing.



HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER

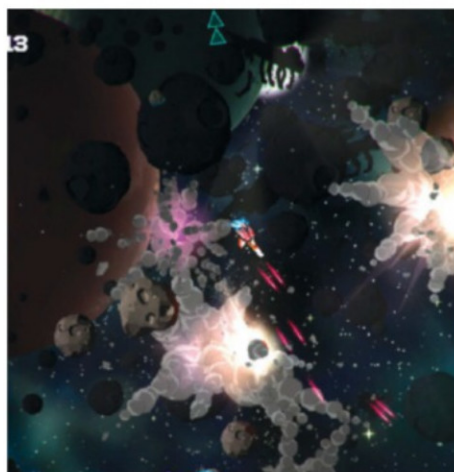
ETA: Q1 2014

The original came out of nowhere and will probably end up topping Game Of The Year lists for many. Expect more score attack violence and edgy social commentary from the neon-lit sequel, another top-down shooter where speed is key and the soundtrack is the best thing ever. One of its more challenging moments is already courting controversy – this series just won't behave itself.

GALAK-Z: THE DIMENSIONAL

ETA: Q1 2014

Okay, so it looks like a traditional 2D shooter. But don't be fooled – the team has taken inspiration from all corners of gaming from multiplayer FPS games to mobile puzzlers in order to make this feel original. And it works. Enemies don't just rush you – they attack tactically, viciously and in packs.



CONTRAST

ETA: Q1 2014

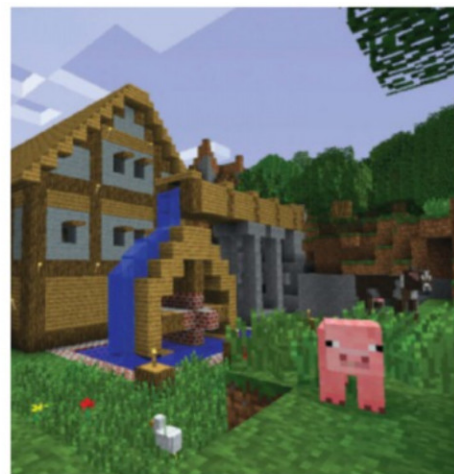
A stylish platformer with a novel gameplay hook, namely that the heroine is capable of leaping into and out of shadows. This presents all kinds of cunning puzzles and ingenious set pieces that you simply won't see in any other game, plus the retro-chic style and accompanying musical selection complement the gameplay and atmosphere beautifully.



ODDWORLD: NEW 'N' TASTY

ETA: Q1 2014

The classic Abe's *Oddworld* is getting a new lick of paint, returning on PS4 to bring its blend of dark humour, platforming and puzzles to a new generation. The franchise has sort of fallen off the wagon lately, so it's great to see the team returning to the game that made us fall in love with Abe in the first place.



MINECRAFT: PLAYSTATION EDITION

ETA: Q2 2014

This is the big one. The 360 version has been topping charts for months, and this hugely popular oddity is finally coming to PlayStation. The voxel-based visuals and freeform nature have become synonymous with indie games for many.

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£54.99

PLAYERS
1-8

AGE RATING
18+

Trophies 51



THE LAW OF diminishing returns is a phenomenon present across all forms of media. Something that once seemed fresh and exciting will gradually become uninspiring and bland. We've seen it with movies, music and television, and games are no exception. *Assassin's Creed III* may have sold millions from brand recognition alone, but creatively it was a step back for the series. Riddled with bugs and over-simplified controls, it was disappointing but perhaps not surprising for what has become an annual franchise. So, a mere year later, is it unrealistic to expect *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* to be any good?

The thing is, sometimes people manage to find a way to break that law. *ACIV* sees the team taking a step back, reassessing what people loved about the series in the first place and coming at it from a new angle. What really helps is that the angle in question is PIRATES.

Honestly, *Pirate's Creed* would have been a more fitting title for this game, and believe us when we say we mean that in a good way. The series has always excelled at dropping players into a slightly exaggerated form of history and letting them soak in the atmosphere, and *ACIV* is utterly oozing with it. Everyone loves pirates, and rightly so – they were bloody cool. This isn't a Disney version of the infamous outlaws either: these guys are ruthless, underhanded and downright nasty... just the way we like it.

Our pirate in question is Welshman Edward Kenway, grandfather of *ACIII* hero Connor. Leaving Wales with dreams of making it big, Edward falls into a life of crime and, as we join him, is already an established privateer in the early 18th Century Caribbean.

The tone of the game is much more fun than that of *ACIII*, thanks largely to its protagonist. Edward has the same cocky swagger that made players fall in love with Ezio Auditore, full of

bravado and the skill to back it up. The game opens with Edward meeting a mysterious assassin. Does he help the man, in doing so realising his own potential as a member of the order? Does he bollocks – Edward kills him and steals his outfit, intending to receive the reward his recent victim was promised.

Edward is very much a pirate first and an assassin second, to the extent that the vast majority of the game will pass before he even becomes a member of the order. All focus on the greater good is gone as Edward is out for himself and himself alone. He's a refreshingly selfish and arrogant character in a series that tends to lean towards the pious.

He might not technically be an assassin, but Edward can still do all the stuff that comes with years of training. As far as character control goes, this is the same game as *ACIII*, albeit tightened up a bit. It's perhaps the biggest problem the game has: *ACIII* suffered from over-simplified controls,

and *Black Flag* is little different. Free running is as simple as holding R2 as you move, a method so simple it often feels as if the game is playing itself on autopilot. The biggest problem of the series also returns, with Edward sticking to every object he comes across as you run from A to B. Players will obviously want to traverse the world as quickly as possible, but when running also makes the character hop onto every little bit of scenery nearby, precision becomes a chore. It's not uncommon to run towards the wheel of your ship, only to hop onto a little ledge in the way and stubbornly refuse to come down. Series fans will be nodding their heads knowingly at this point. It's not a deal breaker, but it is an irritation that Ubisoft has seemed unable to fix over the years.

Combat is also still a bit light, again easy to the point of playing itself. Nearly every foe can be killed by countering, and those that can't merely require a tap of X to disarm them before attacking with a killing blow. Cutting down vast hordes of enemy dudes does make you feel like a badass to begin with, but the lack of challenge removes any sense of genuine accomplishment.

So, in the ways *Black Flag* is similar to *ACIII* it is similarly irritating. It is the ways it is different that set it apart.

No good pirate is complete without a ship, and after a couple of hours Edward becomes the owner of his own vessel, the Jackdaw. The pacing of those early hours is typically slow, but as soon as you take the helm of your ship the game opens up and suddenly, the world is yours to do with as you please. The open world is absolutely huge, stretching out for leagues in every direction.

This is where the power of PS4 makes itself known. The leap in graphics quality isn't enormous, but substantial enough to be impressive. Everything is crisper, cleaner and that bit more realistic, with a draw distance that extends for miles to create incredible views. It helps that this is a very colourful game, all verdant green jungles and deep blue seas as far as the eye can see. The game is almost entirely without loading, only the transitions between the main world and a few large cities requiring a pause. Subtle things like weather effects also



△○×□ Combat is still annoyingly simple, with most guards going down after a simple counter.

benefit from the next-gen tech, with foliage blowing realistically in the wind and some of the most lifelike torrential rain we've seen in a game. It's not a huge leap, but it's a pretty substantial stride.

Sailing around and seeing what you can discover is where *Black Flag* is at its most enjoyable. There's a sense of serene peacefulness as you plow through the waves, similar to how we felt playing *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* a decade ago. The physics of the ocean are excellent, the Jackdaw rising and sinking with the swell of the tide. This is most impressive as you battle through a storm, trying to survive enormous rogue waves and roaming whirlwinds as your ship gets bounced around and your crew clings on for dear life.

The ship and its crew have real character, and you'll grow fond of your floating wooden home. Best of all, the crew can be commanded to sing sea shanties as you sail along, bursting into song at the touch of a button. It sounds minor, but is priceless in adding to the



TROPHY CABINET



KING OF THE CASTLE

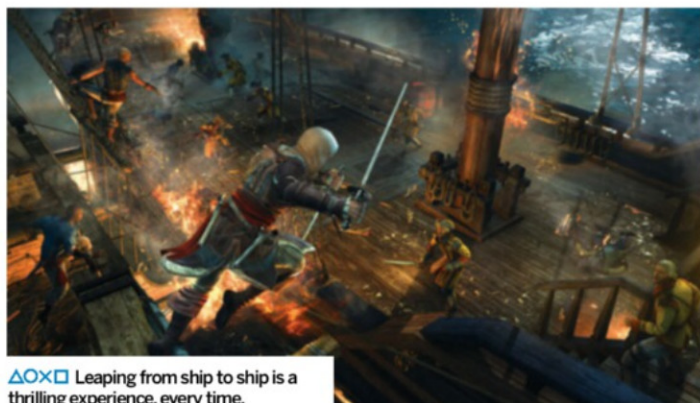
Capturing all the forts dotted around the map will net you this Trophy. It's worth doing as soon as possible, really.



BY THE BOOK

Every mission has optional objectives for 100 per cent completion. Do them all and earn this Trophy.





△×□ Leaping from ship to ship is a thrilling experience, every time.



△×□ Believe it or not, you do have to do quite a lot of climbing.

“CRIPPLE A SHIP AND EDWARD CAN CHOOSE TO EITHER SINK IT OR TRY TO CAPTURE IT”

atmosphere. Sailing along a quiet breeze as the sun sets and your crew sings of lost loves, you'll almost be able to smell the sea salt and feel the wind in your hair.

It's not all peace and quiet though, as *ACIII*'s naval combat makes a return, improved and upgraded to become the best part of *Black Flag* by a long way. English, Spanish and civilian ships litter the waves, and as a pirate it's your job to pillage them as you see fit. The Jackdaw is initially fitted with a chain cannon in front, rows of heavy cannons on both sides and explosive barrels on the back. Players not only sail the ship but aim and fire the weapons, a complicated control scheme that seems worlds away from the on-foot fighting. Learning how to best control your ship might take a while, but becoming a skilled helmsman is extremely rewarding.

The Jackdaw has a huge amount of upgrades available, from stronger

cannons and armour to brand new weapons, such as a very useful mortar. Some of the larger ships, like the huge Man-o'-wars, pack an enormous punch, so you'll need as many upgrades as you can afford. Edward can check out ships with his telescope, finding out at a glance the cargo they are carrying as well as their relative level of power. Huge ships that might initially destroy you slowly become viable prey as you upgrade your ship, and the feeling of progress and vindication when you finally take them down is great. There are even a few elusive Legendary ships – optional encounters that will require a fully upgraded Jackdaw and some extreme sailing skill to emerge victorious.

Cripple a ship and Edward can choose to either sink it or try to capture it by pulling up alongside and reeling it in. These captures are extremely exciting as Edward and his crew leap over to the

other ship and take out its crew at close range. Captured ships can be stripped for repair parts or sent to Edward's fleet to be used in a mini-game mode similar to the assassin's order from *Brotherhood* and *Revelations*. If you can't be bothered, just sink them – you'll still get the precious booty first.

It has to be said though: there are a lot of boats in this game. Even though the world is huge, it's rare to have no other ships in view. They litter the landscape and, although it's useful for gameplay purposes, does spoil the immersion slightly. We doubt there were ever this many boats roaming the Caribbean, or that any pirate ever captured five ships in the space of 30 minutes.

The story tying all this crazy piracy together is never particularly inspiring, although seeing plenty of legendary pirates pop up is entertaining for history buffs. There's still the same old sci-fi nonsense that marred the other games, but thankfully it tends to take a back seat here to the story of a lawless man trying to make his way in the world.

The main criticism of the story is an over-reliance on a few core types of

AYE-PAD How Black Flag benefits from a second screen

MAP

Probably the biggest use of the companion app will be simply having the map to hand at all times. Not having to pause the game and go into a different screen will save you valuable seconds.

FLEETS

Players can also control Kenway's fleet via the app. This mini-game is similar to controlling the assassin's order in past games, sending out ships to complete missions and receiving loot in return.



GOODIES

We've been told that users of the app will be able to unlock extra secrets in-game. Expect new outfits, bonus challenges and more to be released over the next few months.

DATA

The entire Animus Database of facts, files and profiles that fills during the game will be readable on the app. Get your peruse on and you might just learn a thing or two. Well, maybe.

READ MORE

We covered *Black Flag*'s multiplayer in **Play 235**. Grab a copy for your phone or tablet at www.greatdigitalmags.com.



PS3 DIFFERENCES



DRAW DISTANCE

The draw distance on PS4 is huge, giving you amazing views in every direction. It won't match up on PS3, so expect some classic fog-obscured vision.

LOADING

Aside from a few brief moments, there is next to no loading as you sail around. Expect to wait longer – if perhaps only slightly – on current gen.

WEATHER

The weather effects in *Black Flag* are very impressive, particularly in how they affect the environment. Less so on PS3, we'd wager...

TOUCH

Using the touch pad to navigate the map is a natural control method. It'll work fine with regular controller inputs – it's just slightly less intuitive.

missions. Tailing and eavesdropping in particular happens far too often, quickly becoming a chore as you slowly follow some people and wait for them to elaborate on the plot point at hand. The lack of player input makes these tasks a slog but they seem to be mainly consigned to the main storyline, so players fancying something else can always swan off to greener pastures.

And boy, there are plenty of those. The main story itself is huge, taking a solid 25-30 hours to get through, and the amount of extra content heaped on

top is gargantuan. Getting the elusive 100 per cent in *Black Flag* will take some serious commitment. Besides the obligatory collectables, players can take on assassination missions, send their fleet out to perform tasks, explore wreckage for elusive booty, hunt sharks and whales via a fun harpooning mini-game, raid storehouses for stuff to sell, craft and upgrade their kit with various animal skins, track down ancient Aztec treasures and recruit new sailors.

It's easy to keep track of what you have and haven't done thanks to a

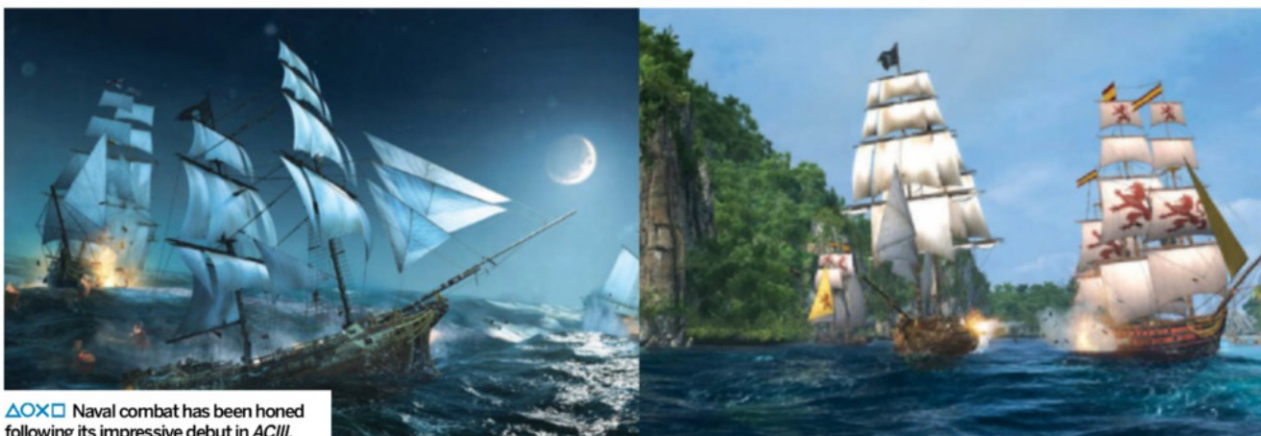
△×□ The additional power of PS4 is easy to see in the environments Edward explores.

decent map, slowly revealed by the player's actions. On land this is done in the classic manner of reaching high points and Synchronising, while at sea a portion of the map is revealed after taking one of the naval ports that dot the landscape. Do either and the surrounding area will be filled in, detailing everything of note in a small radius.

Some people might dislike having every little collectable marked on the map in advance, but in a game with such a huge amount of things to do it's a great help. Simply knowing where these things are doesn't remove any challenge, as a lot of them require some thinking to actually pinpoint and reach.

The map is accessed by pressing in the touchpad, and can be navigated by touching, swiping and pinching the pad like you would on a tablet or smartphone. Using your thumbs to pinch and stretch to zoom the map in and out quickly becomes second nature, and moving the map with a swipe is great. This is precisely the kind of simple

"GETTING 100 PER CENT IN BLACK FLAG WILL TAKE SOME SERIOUS COMMITMENT"



△×□ Naval combat has been honed following its impressive debut in *ACIII*.

FOR FANS
OF...



RED DEAD REDEMPTION Another great open-world game set in a fascinating period of American history. Utterly essential.



but useful idea that we want to see more of with the PS4 touchpad.

So, that's the majority of how you'll be spending your time in *Black Flag*, a fun adventure that is better at sea than it is on land. Remember though, that this is still an *Assassin's Creed* game and wouldn't be complete without a nonsensical present day section. Luckily for all of us, the infuriatingly boring Desmond is gone and done, replaced with... you. The present day bits are now first-person, as your nameless character reports for their first day at Abstergo Entertainment, the new videogame development arm of the Templar-run Abstergo Industries. Using the genetic memory of Desmond, the player is tasked with sifting through the life of Edward Kenway in an attempt to make a videogame of his life. Of course, there are some nefarious forces behind the scenes and plenty of conspiracies that make things harder than they should be for our eager new employee.

These modern day levels have some enjoyably meta moments, the Abstergo Entertainment offices apparently based on those at Ubisoft Montreal. They don't outstay their welcome, or interrupt the main game to the same extent as Desmond's bits in games past. Curious players can go around hacking computers to find out little snippets about what's going on, but those eager to get back into the pirate life can usually do so in a few minutes. We aren't sold that the series needs this modern day hook at all, but if it insists on keeping it in, this is the way to do so.

Thanks to the fact we played an early PS4 version of the game, we unfortunately weren't able to try out the multiplayer component of *Assassin's Creed IV*. Rest assured that there is more than enough single-player content to warrant a purchase, and we'll be all over the online element next issue. By all accounts, it's similar to the online of previous games – a surprisingly decent multiplayer mode that favours a slow pace and careful play.

After the disappointment of *Assassin's Creed III*, *Black Flag* being such an enjoyable return to form is a really pleasant surprise. The classic complaints of sticky movement and weak melee combat return, but the rest is such an enjoyable package that these foibles don't ruin the experience. As far as pirate simulators go, we don't know if we've ever played a game that made the lifestyle seem this much fun. Thanks to a great new protagonist and enjoyable naval combat, this is the easiest *Assassin's Creed* game to recommend since the glory days of *ACII*. There's still plenty to fix, sure, but this is still a huge step in the right direction.

Sam Smith

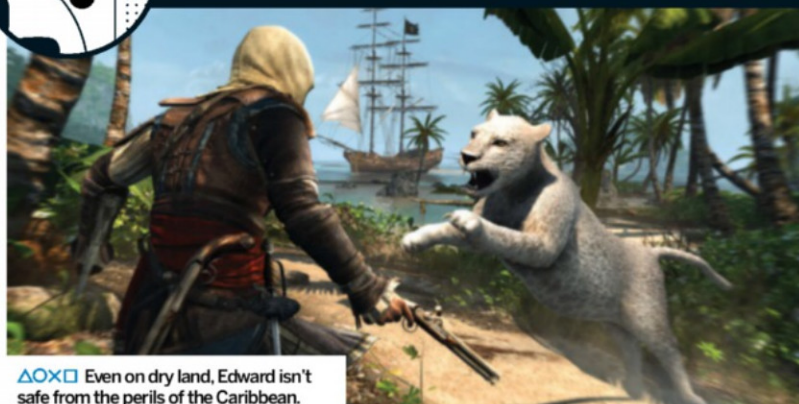
VERDICT

The PS4 is off to a great start with one of the best AC games to date and a welcome improvement after its underwhelming predecessor. Living out those pirate dreams has never looked this good.

83%



PLAY CHALLENGE



△×○ Even on dry land, Edward isn't safe from the perils of the Caribbean.

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



EAT THIS

△ HUNTING FOR ANIMAL pelts is necessary for upgrading stuff, but can you murder an ocelot with your bare hands?



OUTGUNNED

□ RECKON YOU CAN beat the two Legendary ships with a non-upgraded Jackdaw? Only master seafarers need apply.

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

Batman: Arkham Origins

The battle for Gotham City

o, Alfred - I am NOT in over my head. Tonight not be my end. But it will be theirs.

Although it doesn't show how Batman becomes a crimefighter, *Origins* still has a look at his early years of becoming Gotham's saviour.



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Warner Bros

DEVELOPER

Warner Bros Montreal

PRICE

£34.99

PLAYERS

1-8

AGE RATING

16+

WEBSITE

batmanarkhamorigins.com

Trophies 51



THE BOX MIGHT say *Arkham Origins* but this is *Arkham City: Round 2*. And really, that's the

review done. Really, that's it. Those 12 words and a number. If it wasn't for stringent word counts and a designer who'd get angry at having nothing to fill four pages with bar crayons and his imagination, that would be all that would need to be said.

But you're probably expecting us to be a little more professional than that, so let us indulge you. Following the surprise hit *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Arkham City* pushed in the only direction it could – upwards and outwards, making everything bigger, better and dramaticier (not a word but work with us here), the reward being rave reviews and huge sales. Those games were developed by Rocksteady. Warner Bros has since taken the series away from Rocksteady's capable hands and handed it to its freshly created

Warner Bros Montreal studio. This is the Montreal outfit's first crack at the series.

Apologies for the history lesson but it's necessary because *Batman: Arkham Origins* is essentially Warner Bros Montreal replicating the successful Rocksteady formula, like a student who is keen to show his teacher that he's learnt everything by the book.

“ORIGINS IS WARNER BROS REPLICATING THE SUCCESSFUL ROCKSTEADY FORMULA”

That's not being disrespectful to Warner Bros Montreal but it *is* being entirely honest. Everything here from the combat to the structure to the side-missions to the collectibles has all been done before in *Arkham City*.

Even the city itself is largely familiar. Warner Bros Montreal has imported Gotham from *Arkham City* while bulking it out with new areas to poke and

prod around in, adding a huge bridge connecting old and new. But you'll glide around familiar gothic architecture that triggers flashbacks to *Arkham City* – the courtroom, the steel mill, ACE Chemicals and so on.

What's surprising is that Warner Bros Montreal itself seems to admit that *Arkham City* players will feel

they're on familiar ground, as you're booted into *Origins* with barely a hint of a tutorial, the gaming equivalent of “blah blah blah, you know the drill already”. It's a pleasant surprise, as there is nothing worse than a lumbering tutorial that crushes any enjoyment, but it's also a significant confession. Warner Bros *knows* that you've played this before. It knows you understand how



△○×□ Inverted takedowns are still the best way to clear rooms, providing you have an escape route after suspending each guard from your perch.

© Detective Vision

Hotel Employee: Please. Please don't!

△○×□ There's a fantastic level of detail in *Origins*, which makes it a great game if you want to slow down and play virtual tourist and just look at things.

to grapple around the city, how to pull down air-vents, how to scoop patrolling guards from lofty gargoyle perches. *Origins* doesn't even focus on the slow build-up of gadgets like the previous two games in the series, happily stuffing Batman's utility belt with plenty of toys right from the start and only leaving a few gaps to be plugged during the game's running time.

At this point, we should acknowledge that some of you won't have played *Arkham City*, so here's what to expect from *Origins*. You're playing as Batman (surprise!), gliding his way through Gotham's exteriors and picking off enemies in Gotham's interiors by striking from the shadows. Stealth is the most effective option when there are goons who need to be cleared out but it's rarely forced upon on the player, lending a flexibility to every scenario as you decide how you want to approach it and which of Batman's gadgets to use. Crawling through the air vents and silently taking out the guards?

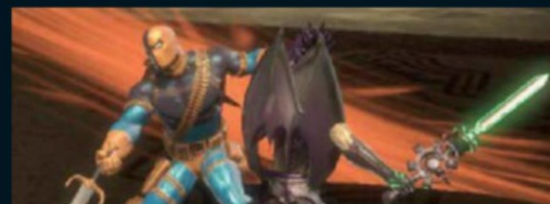


INTRODUCING DEATHSTROKE

Why Deathstroke is actually good now compared to his previous appearances

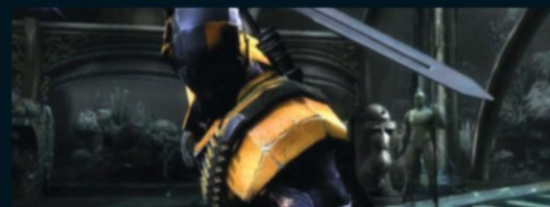
PREVIOUSLY IN... DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

Why He Sucked: Deathstroke shows up in the mission where you're tracking down The Riddler, as he's on his own mission to assassinate him. It's hard to tell that it is Deathstroke, his swords disappearing in an orange blur and his grenade launcher looking like any other explosion in *DCUO*. He keeps his mask on at all times as well.



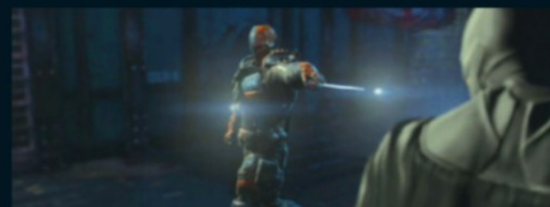
PREVIOUSLY IN... INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

Why He Sucked: In terms of fan service, Deathstroke is brilliant in *Injustice*. He has swords, flips, pistols, grenade launchers... the works. You also get to see Slade Wilson without his mask. The problem is that almost everyone who played him spammed pistols, making him the most boring opponent in the entire game.



CURRENTLY IN... BATMAN: ARKHAM ORIGINS

Why He Works: Although it's not the best boss battle throughout the *Arkham* series, this is the only one where you feel like Batman has met his match – someone who can go toe-to-toe with him, Deathstroke relying on his skills as a fighter rather than tricks like Scarecrow, Mad Hatter or Mr Freeze from previous games.



The reason the fight works is that the momentum constantly switches between the two combatants, Batman occasionally forced to fend off a Deathstroke assault following flashbangs while Deathstroke can counter Batman's attacks, demanding that you counter *his* counter. It all gets very complicated.



As the fight progresses, Deathstroke loses his mask. It's a small touch but a brilliant one, as it shows how the two fighters are being worn down by the battle. It's just a shame that none of the other boss fights in *Arkham Origins* live up to this one, relying more on gimmicks than focusing on the core gameplay like the Deathstroke encounter does.



Setting up explosive gel 'tripmines' while remaining unseen? Waiting under grates for patrolling guards to pass? Throwing batarangs from higher perches? Do what you will.

While the story and side-missions pull you through certain interior locations, you'll spend most of your time in snowy Gotham, using your grapple hook to zip from building to building as you explore for collectibles and side-missions and stop crimes that are taking place. Once you get used to the grapple hook, it feels like there are very few limitations placed on where you can go and what you can see. Annoyingly, like *Arkham City*, there's a huge dead spot in the city where a building with spikes protruding out the wall prevents you from scaling

up and over it (it's no longer Hugo Strange's domain but you'll see what it is when you play *Origins*). But apart from that, if you don't want to hurtle through the story, it's a wonderful city to explore – detailed, intriguing and full of things to do.

And speaking of story, the plot is a simple affair, scaling back the lunacy *Batman: Arkham City* needed to stitch its multiple villains together in the same plot. Now it's a hunter-becomes-the-hunted tale. On Christmas Eve, Batman discovers that Black Mask has hired eight assassins to eliminate him and so he decides to take them out first before any innocent lives are caught up in the crossfire. Only things aren't quite as they seem! Who is really responsible for the

“THE ENTIRE ART DEPARTMENT AT WARNER BROS MONTREAL NEEDS A PAT ON THE BACK”



mayhem? And so on. We're not going to reveal the twists here except to say that nothing comes as a real surprise and the eight assassins concept doesn't quite hold up as well as it initially seems.

But regardless, there are two reasons you'll fall in love with *Arkham Origins*. Like the two *Arkham* games before it, it's dripping with an obsessive level of detail that makes exploration a joy. Head to Gotham City's Police Department and nosy players will find Commissioner Gordon's office, adorned with newspaper clippings of reports about a mysterious and shadowy crimefighter cleaning up Gotham's streets. Each villain's lair is adorned with various quirks and oddities that don't need to be observed but they add so much personality, charm and menace that you can't help but look. The entire art department at Warner Bros Montreal needs a pat on the back – a lot of work has gone into this.

But this would all mean nothing if it wasn't fun to see Batman crunch his fist into the skulls of various goons and it's perfect here. Combat is anchored around a simple system where attacks automatically home in on your enemy, Batman gliding around the battle arena like a muscular ballerina.



As Batman slides around, you have to keep your eye out for the small lightning symbol that signposts an incoming attack – your only prompt to counter the move. The two systems combine so Batman attacks and defends himself in a blur of cape and fists, a combo gauge ticking ever upwards and eventually offering more powerful moves.

Although it's not a particularly sexy sounding award, it's easily the best third-person hand-to-hand combat system in any game this gen. Better than *Assassin's Creed*, better than *Uncharted*, better than *The Last Of Us*. It's powered by how satisfying it is to nail counters and watch Batman snapping loose limbs, rearranging his enemies and folding them up into new shapes like human origami.

Arkham Origins throws new enemies into the mix, such as martial artists who need to be countered twice rather than once, but this is one of the few



areas where Warner Bros Montreal is right not to have been too ambitious in pushing its own agenda. The combat is such a delicate, well-crafted system that care is necessary to ensure it isn't unbalanced by any ill-thought additions. That's certainly not the case here.

Batman isn't just about flailing his fists in the general direction of crime though. He's also a detective, hence the new element of detective work. Upon discovering a crime scene, Batman can start scanning the area for clues, voicing his theory on what happened out loud as you piece together the evidence. It adds a nice change of pace to the storyline, which usually alternates between light platforming and enter-room-clear-room sections where enemies roam. What's a shame is that it doesn't really require much thought from you, as it's simply a case of looking around the room until you find the highlighted object, and Warner Bros Montreal seems to forget about it altogether as the plot picks up pace.

Mostly, the differences between *Arkham Origins* and *Arkham City* come down to vague notions of design rather than tangible additions such as new mechanics. There's a slightly more linear structure threading Batman through the sprawl of Gotham, avoiding the lack of focus *Arkham City* sometimes succumbed to. Bosses are more straightforward affairs than previously seen in the series – there's nothing to

match the suspense of Killer Croc's ambushes in *Arkham Asylum* or the drama of Mr Freeze stalking you in *City*. The Riddler Trophies (now Riddler data-packs! There's another difference!) have been scaled back in number, making them a more tempting proposition to hunt down.

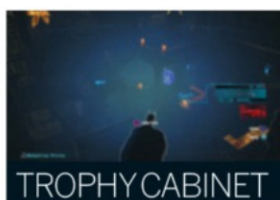
But even there, we're talking about hunting Riddler collectibles and fighting bosses in the same city. This is essentially the same game as *Arkham City*, albeit with new faces and a fresh coat of paint. So it figures that just like *Arkham City* before it, *Arkham Origins* is also brilliant, even if it has a whiff of déjà vu about it. Existing fans will relish the chance to explore Gotham and drink in the detail while going toe-to-toe with some marque villains plucked from DC Comics' rich history. It's just a shame that while Warner Bros Montreal proved it was a student capable of copying Rocksteady's formula, it didn't have the confidence to add any real ambition of its own.

Ryan King

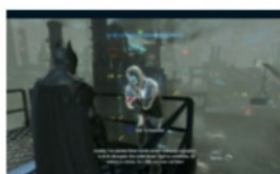
VERDICT

Batman: *Arkham Origins* is a fantastic game, anchored by its incredible combat system and wonderful city to explore. It's just a shame we've seen this game before in *Arkham City*.

85%



ANYONE SEE THAT? You need to clear a Predator room without being spotted for this Trophy. Stick to the perches, use Inverted Takedowns and take your time.



VOICE OF THE PEOPLE After triggering the Anarky side-quest, fly around Gotham using Detective Vision. This will make it much easier to spot the 20 tags needed to grab the Trophy.

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn

Living in a Materia world



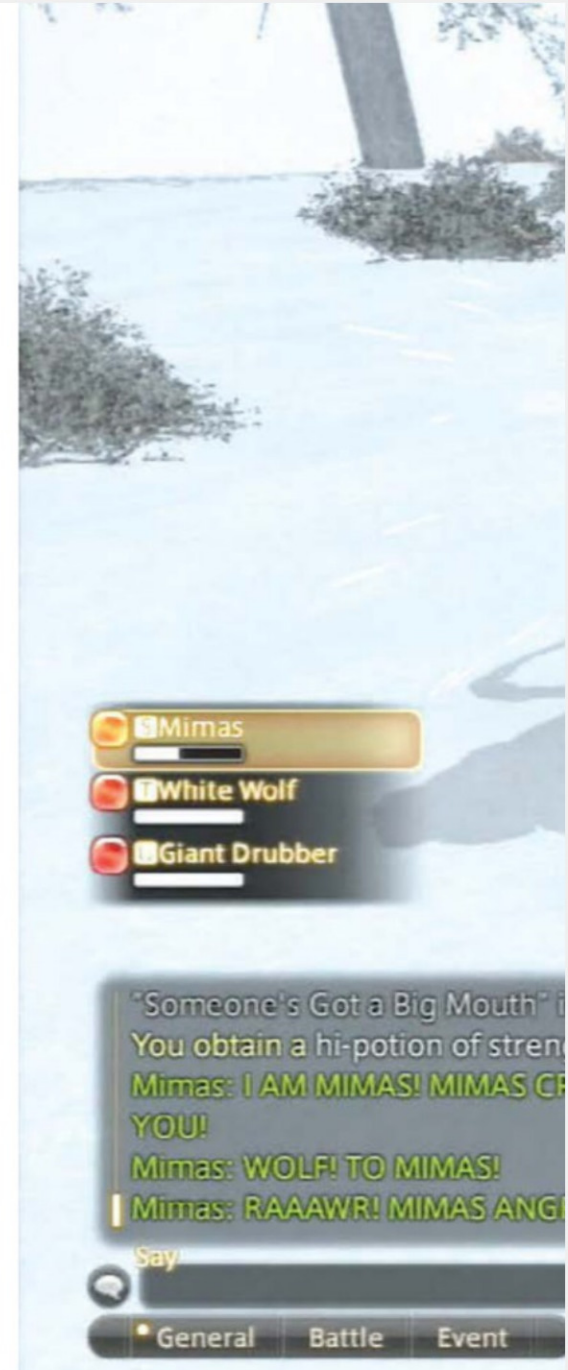
SO IT TURNS out MMOs do work on consoles after all – it just takes a hell of a lot of effort. Square is one of the few developers with experience in the field (having ported *FFXI* to both PS2 and Xbox 360) and it shows, with *A Realm Reborn* standing a clear cat-eared head and pauldroned shoulders above every other console attempt at a traditional MMO.

And 'traditional' is the word. While the likes of *EverQuest Next* look to lead the genre off into new territory, *FFXIV* sticks closely to the tried and tested template that has dominated hearts, minds and wallets since *World Of Warcraft* first exploded onto the scene. Trivial fetch quests and hunts, incrementally improving gear and abilities and instanced events are all present and correct, with PvP play set to follow in the first major update. While *DC Universe* was an action-heavy slant on the genre for a console generation, *FFXIV* isn't embarrassed to keep the focus on cooldown management, positioning and crowd control – the format, while seen a million times on PC, feels oddly fresh with a DualShock 3 in hand.

A large part of the success is due to some clever controller mapping in order to squeeze an entire keyboard onto two sticks and ten buttons. It feels clumsy and confusing to begin with but, after the first few hours, the various shortcuts and modifiers become surprisingly natural.

Looking at both versions side by side, it's clear that a lot of concessions have had to be made in order to get *FFXIV* running smoothly on PS3. Whereas the PC version is a thing of beauty (expect the PS4 version to look equally stunning, incidentally), much of the PS3 version is sadly pretty ugly. Technically, at least – the art direction saves the day and even in busy areas, the engine usually manages to hold steady.

The real winner here is the class system, though. All too often have we picked a profession in an RPG only to discover 50-odd hours later that we don't actually like it very much. Here, changing jobs is as simple as switching your equipped weapon or tool for another. Many skills from each class can be used by others, so experimentation is crucial to some of the best character builds. Each job falls into one of three typical main roles (tanks, damage and



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Square Enix

PSN PRICE
£28.49 plus £8.99/
month subscription

PLAYERS
Massively multiplayer

INSTALL SIZE
7.5GB + patches

AGE RATING
16+

TWITTER
@FF_XIV_EN

Trophies 39



ΔOX□ It's not all dark and dingy – some of the locations are actually quite pretty.



ΔOX□ A USB keyboard is pretty much a necessity for communication.



content, we'll be happy to keep paying – timecard payment allows you to drop in and out rather than paying a rolling monthly fee, meaning you can log back on for a month whenever new content hits if you just want to see what's up.

Familiar as it may be, there's something oddly compelling about *FFXIV*. It's the fusion of proven MMO mechanics and interesting *Final Fantasy* lore that keeps you coming back, plus gathering and crafting classes are actually fun to mess around with rather than necessary evils. A solid MMO, then, and hands down the best on console.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Final Fantasy XIV is a refreshing rarity. It's unlikely to win you over if you can't stand MMOs, but otherwise we'd say Eorzea is at least worth a visit, whether you eventually end up living there or not.

81%

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

INCREDIBLE. I love it! Best MMO I've ever played, and I've played a lot.
@pablo_ha55an

Who cares? I want Square to stop focusing on this and start hurrying up with *FFXVI*.
@1337k1l13r

You Tube are a game changer. My only real grievance is the map.
kablee

You Tube to be, but I'm still not sold. Why does any game need a subscription fee in this day and age?
superking1222



PS4 ENHANCEMENTS



TEXTURES

Textures that often take an age to load in properly mean it never looks that nice. Expect the PS4 version to look more in line with the tasty PC version.

POPULATION

On PS3, *FFXIV* struggles when too many objects are supposed to be on-screen. The PS4 version will be able to handle far more going on at once.

SERVICES

By the time the game arrives on PS4, the launch window buzz will have died down. This should do away with most of *FFXIV*'s connection woes.

UPGRADING

PS3 players will reportedly be able to upgrade to the PS4 version for free when it arrives early next year, plus they'll also get first access to the PS4 beta.

REVIEW ROUND-UP

THERE'S NOTHING THE disturbingly competitive **Play** team enjoys more than a good fighting game. But similarly, nothing rubs us up the wrong way quite like a terrible one, and that's exactly what **GIRL FIGHT [1]**, the latest effort from Kung Fu Factory, is. It's about as bad as its horrible name suggests – it looks awful, animation is awkward to the point of making *Mortal Kombat* look fluid, the ladies-only roster (the clue's in the name, we suppose) is offensive on a number of levels and the breast physics must have been programmed by somebody who thought *Dead Or Alive* was a bit too realistic. With so many awesome brawlers on PS3, you have to wonder who would even buy this... and then you look at the unlockables and it all becomes clear. It's teenager titillation over technicality here and the result is a woeful fighter that just leaves you feeling short-changed and more than a little bit grotty.

While its maid dresses and cosplay outfits might not be a million miles

away from the ludicrous and impractical getups seen in *Girl Fight*, **HATSUNE MIKU: PROJECT DIVA F [2]** is far more innocent and playful and so gets away with it. In any case, it's a game about pop stars and idols (who actually do dress like that) as opposed to world-class fighters (who famously don't) and while it's so sickly sweet that it'll probably rot your teeth, the old-school rhythm action gameplay is refreshing after years of pretending to play plastic instruments.

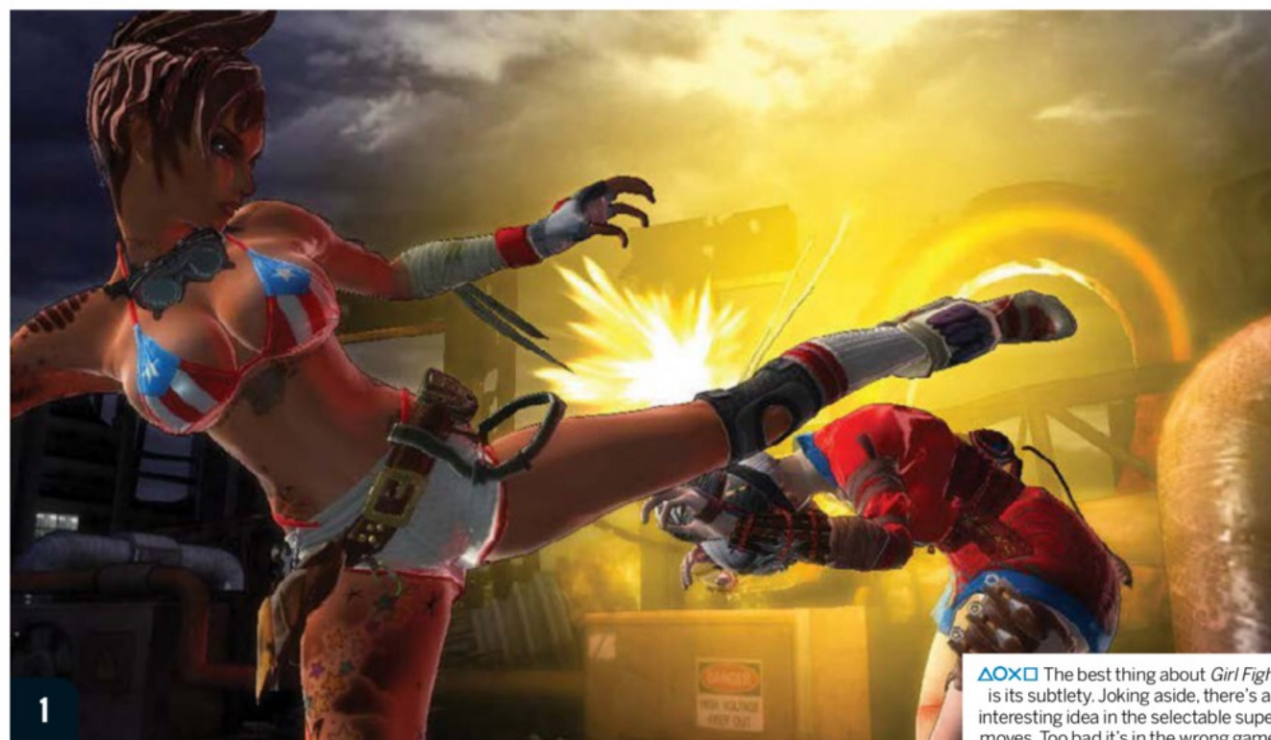
“UNLESS YOU SPEAK FLUENT NIPPON ICHI, IT'S ALMOST IMPENETRABLE”

It's *hard*, though – even if you pride yourself on your Expert-level *Guitar Hero* skills, you'll still have to take the time to get used to some strange note charting and mechanics if you want to get the best scores. Don't expect to know any of the songs – or even like them, unless you're the kind of person that occasionally finds

themselves humming an anime theme tune – but the game itself is great fun, even if it does seem kind of expensive when most other traditional music games now come in at the budget end of the pricing spectrum.

And from a game that does just one thing – namely J-Pop tap-alongs – to one that does practically everything, **THE GUIDED FATE PARADOX [3]** is the latest RPG... *thing* from Nippon Ichi, the team behind the awesome *Disgaea* franchise. Whereas *Disgaea* puts you in the shoes of a demonic overlord, this

△×□ The Guided Fate Paradox is one for the hardcore and no mistake – the clue is sort of in those huge numbers that spring from damaged enemies.



△×□ The best thing about *Girl Fight* is its subtlety. Joking aside, there's an interesting idea in the selectable super moves. Too bad it's in the wrong game.





oddity casts you as a newly-appointed god who wins his powers in a lottery, but that's far from the only change – the whole thing is more roguelike (it's a randomly-generated dungeon crawler) than turn-based strategy, although it does still manage to squeeze in entire spreadsheets' worth of stat-walls and introduce a new mechanic which is (somehow) even more confusing than the last roughly every nine seconds.



Unless you speak fluent Nippon Ichi, it's almost impenetrable, and even though its tutorials aren't bad by any stretch, there's so much for your brain to juggle that it'll inevitably end up dropping something at some point. There's something quite crushing about plummeting back to level one every time you start a new dungeon, though there's thankfully at least *some* permanent stat gain. In typical NIS style, it's funny, stylish and borderline overwhelming in terms of how much there is to get your head around, but if you enjoyed *Disgaea*, chances are you'll get a kick out of this as well. Not least because there are so many nods to the Netherworld, like the sweet Prinny jet that you can ride around in.

Since we've already slipped dangerously close to 'if you like this sort of thing, you'll like this' territory, it's probably



ΔOXΔ If the idea of your television looking like this for hours on end excites you, you probably already own *F1 2013*.

ΔOXΔ No, *Project Diva* doesn't have a racing mini-game. This is *F1 2013*, silly. You can tell because cars.

only fitting that we should discuss **F1 2013 [4]** – lazy as it may be, that statement fits Codemasters' new racing game perfectly. Casual racing fans can make do with jack-of-all-trades racers like *Grid* and *Gran Turismo*, but purists will settle for nothing less than the full Grand Prix day spectacle. And in that respect, *F1 2013* absolutely delivers. The game is punishingly tough to get to grips with, but that's sort of the idea – once you've managed to tame one of the millionaire go-karts, what more is there to do? If you're sick of a racing genre that has been watered down with hand-holding assists and time-bending rewinds, there's a lot to be said for a game in which one lapse of concentration could cost you a race. Authenticity is often shunted in favour of accessibility, so kudos to Codemasters for having the balls to keep it real. It's what the fans demand from a racer like this, after all...





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INTERVIEW

BEHIND THE MASKS

BUILDING COD: GHOSTS' MULTIPLAYER

Activision's senior community manager Tina Palacios talks female soldiers, fan feedback and crafting Call Of Duty's most explosive multiplayer yet



What would you say is the biggest shake-up to the multiplayer formula in *Ghosts* for fans of *Modern Warfare*?

It was important to us that you had control over the way you wanted to play online. We changed our perk system, so you have a points system now. You can spend your points on whatever perks you want and each one has a different cost associated with it, based on what it does. So, if you want to just use all speed perks, you can totally do that.

Let's talk about the addition of female soldiers. Why has it taken so long? Was that something that fans were particularly calling for from *Ghosts*?

We'd been considering it for a little while. The reason we decided to put women into the game this time around was because you get to

customise the way your soldiers look, so it only felt natural to let you be female as well. But on top of that, we just really felt it was time that we included them. Even before we had announced we'd be having women in our game, we had a lot of feedback from fans asking actively to be female – even from a vocal male fanbase, which was a surprise. We were more than happy to oblige.

Infinity Ward has been vocal about taking ideas from fan feedback. Can you give us some examples?

First off, a lot of our fans were unhappy with Death Streaks in *Modern Warfare 3*, so we decided to get rid of them altogether. But on top of that, when we were creating the Assault, Support and Specialist Killstreak packages, we noticed that a lot of people weren't too happy with the Support package. It had a Stealth Bomber in it, and people felt like it gave you too many easy kills so we got rid of it

entirely. Now all the Support Streaks either help out your team in some way, or require skill to get you kills. For example, we have something called a Helo Sniper in Support now, which is a helicopter that picks you up off the ground. You can control where it goes on the map and you get a sniper rifle. So, if you're really good at sniping, you can get a couple of kills, or you can just use the rifle to get eyes-on and let your teammates know where the enemy is.

How much of what you see in multiplayer makes an appearance in the single-player?

In terms of characters, Riley is in single-player, and you'll be able to call in a dog similar to Riley in multiplayer. Most importantly, the multiplayer teams felt very inspired by the single-player's cinematic pieces – the intense moments in the game that make you say 'wow'. We wanted to bring those moments into the multiplayer, and the way we decided to do that was with Dynamic Map Events. One good example is Whiteout, where you're running around this snow map and a satellite falls from the sky. You see it enter orbit, the bright white flashing light, and then it crashes to the ground. Then you and your teammates can rush to it before the enemy and grab whatever it drops. There's another example: with Strike Zone, you're fighting in a stadium and the dynamic event is called a KEM Strike, and when you earn it you can use it to totally destroy the map, so you end up running around the debris of the stadium. It essentially becomes a whole new map.



Another rendition of *Man With Gun Simulator*, but will *Ghosts* offer enough new features?

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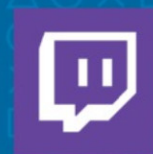
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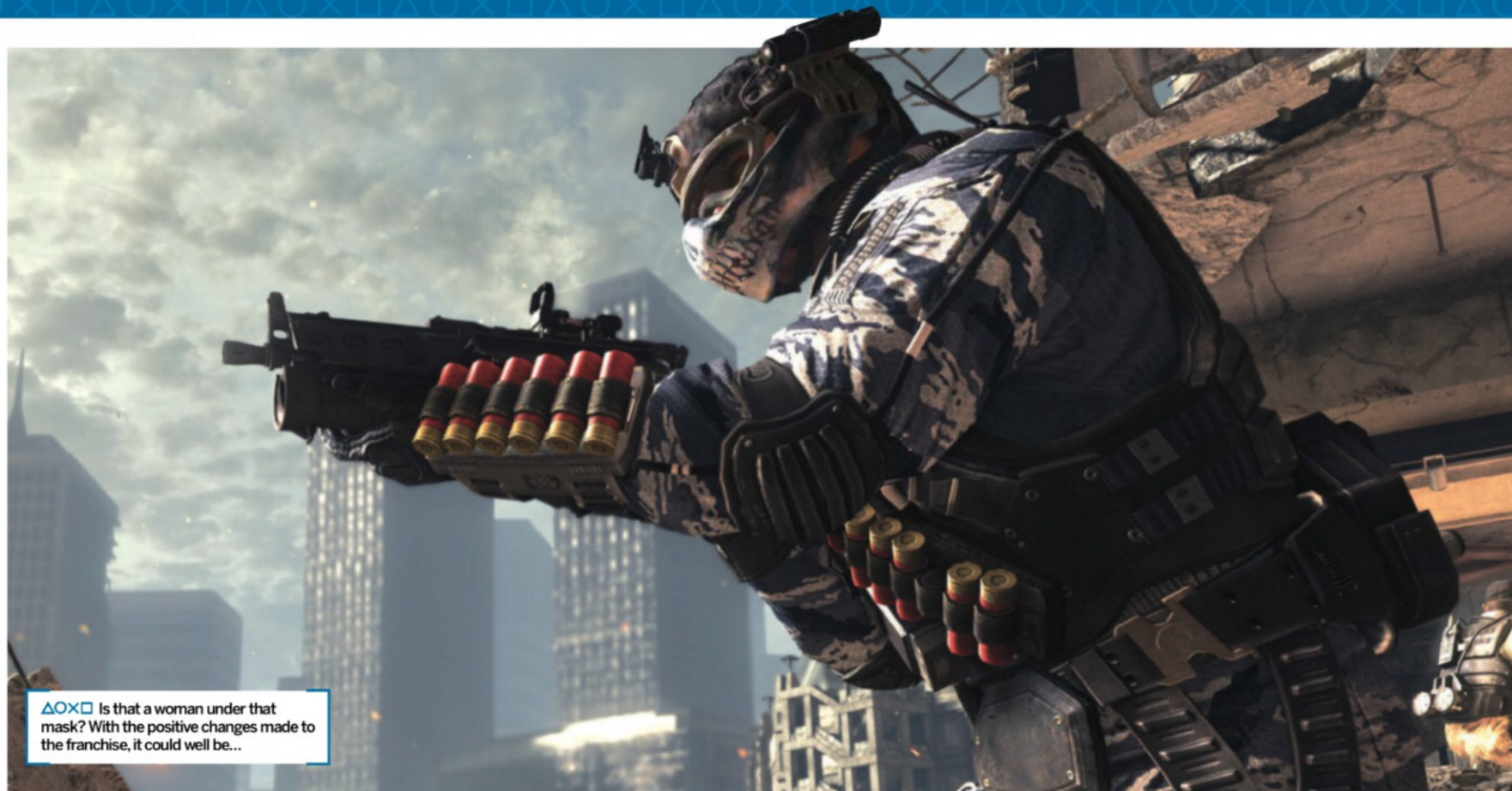
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ΔΟΧ Is that a woman under that mask? With the positive changes made to the franchise, it could well be...

What was it like designing a *COD* game set after the collapse of the US? How does that setting feed into the design?

The biggest example I can give is that, in the *Modern Warfare* series, you were always the superpower and had everything you needed to win the war. In *Ghosts* it's the exact opposite: you're very limited in resources and manpower. So for single-player and multiplayer the art team ran with that and created some really gritty, decayed environments. The weapons team had a lot of fun not having to make these bright, shiny, new weapons anymore; they could make them gritty. The Honey Badger is a great example. The designer decided 'OK, I'm going to put duct tape on here, some graffiti, scratches...' So it really pushed the art team to go in a different direction.

Can you talk us through the inspiration behind the new game modes? Especially *Squads Mode* and how it's going to work as a replacement for *Spec Ops*?

Well, because we're asking fans to customise up to ten soldiers in multiplayer with the weapons and perks and the way they look in general, we wanted to give them a third game mode that took advantage of that time they spent. So, we're



BUILDING STONEHAVEN

The design behind one of *Ghosts*' biggest multiplayer arenas

■ When the multiplayer team at Infinity Ward start building a new map, the first question is size. "We say, 'OK, we need a large map – one that caters to snipers but also to people who like to run-and-gun in close quarters,'" says Palacios. Then the team starts scouting for suitable locations. "One of our multiplayer guys decided to look very closely at Europe, and the UK specifically," she says. "He looked at Irish and Scottish castles, castles in England, to create the setting where not only can you run around in a large field, you can also battle inside a castle as well." The result is Stonehaven, a very British-looking coastal castle-turned-tourist-attraction with tight corridors, open spaces and – yes – a working portcullis.

going to have various game modes in *Squads* in which you can play with up to five of your friends against bots, or even you and your squad against your friend and their squad. And you can still earn experience, even though you're not in multiplayer – not as much as in multiplayer, but it's still something. We wanted it to cater to new and old fans alike, so if you're new to the *Call Of Duty* universe and you want to jump in and get some experience you can do so by playing against bots, and you can get a feel for multiplayer and then play against the hardcore audience.

Is there anything like *Spec Ops* mode planned? One-shot co-op missions?

We have a mode in *Squads* called Safeguard inspired by the Survival Mode we had in *Modern Warfare 3*, so that's coming back. But I think people are going to have more fun exploring the new modes in which you have the soldiers you create as allies on your team fighting against other teams. That's the new dynamic for us.

Finally can you tell us anything about DLC?

In terms of DLC, we haven't really fleshed out any of our concepts yet because we're still finishing *Ghosts*, but, you know, no ideas are off the table.

EXTENDED PLAY

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

ALL THE EXTRAS FOR IRRATIONAL'S MASTERPIECE

THE SIEGE OF COLUMBIA

■ **SO SOMETHING HAPPENED** to the world and all of a sudden, board games are cool. As evangelists of awesome tabletop games like *Mansions Of Madness* and *Super Dungeon Explore*, we're absolutely down with this but it might come as a surprise to many to see a board game based on *BioShock*. Most gaming board game tie-ins have tended to just bastardise existing franchises – check out *Metal Gear Solid Risk*, *Pokémonopoly* and *LA Noire Guess Who* if you don't believe us. Okay, so we made the last one up. But it's still a thrill to experience the world of Columbia in so novel a way as that presented here. Two or four players take on the roles of Columbia's warring factions, with Booker and Elizabeth serving as NPCs who can ruin the dreams of either side. The game's lore and world translate brilliantly to board game form and, while the game itself could be a little on the complex side for those whose board gaming knowledge doesn't extend far beyond *Cluedo*, it's an awesome twist on a great game.



BURIAL AT SEA

■ **WHILE CLASH IN** *The Clouds* was released to minimal fanfare, the meat of the *BioShock Infinite* Season Pass is this; a two-part return to Rapture before it all went a bit wrong. After seeing the place in tatters in the first two games, exploring it in its heyday is an utter delight – it's every bit as glitzy and decadent as you might imagine. It's kind of a fusion between all that was great about the original game and the new mechanics added in *Infinite*. As such, you get to play around with new Vigors as well

as some previously unseen Plasmids and, while you're back in the shoes of Booker DeWitt for the first episode (which, by the time you read this, should be available to download both alone and as part of the Season Pass), the second has a little twist in store. Here, you'll get to play as Elizabeth, and while we don't know much in the way of specifics, the very idea of being able to open tears of our own is enough to secure one more season pass sale. Although to be honest, Irrational, you had us at 'Rapture'...



CLASH IN THE CLOUDS

■ **IF YOU'RE ONE** of the people who finished *BioShock Infinite* and immediately dropped some cash on the Season Pass to see what would happen next, we feel your pain. *Clash In The Clouds*, while far from terrible, still focussed on what was one of *Infinite*'s weaker aspects – if we wanted an arena-based combat mode, we'd just play some *Borderlands*. Still, *Clash In The Clouds* was seemingly only there to tide us over until the main event (as in the return to Rapture), so it's hard to criticise Irrational for ensuring that early Season Pass purchasers had something with which to occupy themselves until the proper story DLC was ready. If you loved *Infinite*'s combat then you'll pretty much by proxy love this. But if you were all about the world and the story, you'd do well to skip the starter and just wait patiently for the main course. The chef assures us that you won't be disappointed.



1999 MODE

■ **IF YOU'RE LOOKING** to go back to *Infinite* but haven't yet signed up for the Season Pass, the game's own super-tough difficulty might be the challenge you're after. Item drops are minimal on this old-school mode and it's actually possible to get stuck with no way to progress if you end up using resources incorrectly. Ken Levine has said that his intention was to recreate the same kind of experience as in the original *System Shock* games, back before hand-holding and tutorials were the norm. And right enough it ain't easy, but the challenge of beating it is enjoyable in its own right. You can even challenge this mode by unlocking it with a code rather than finishing the game first – simply enter the Konami code (Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Circle, X) on the title screen. We wouldn't advise tackling it on your first run, though...



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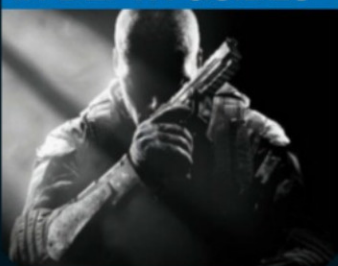
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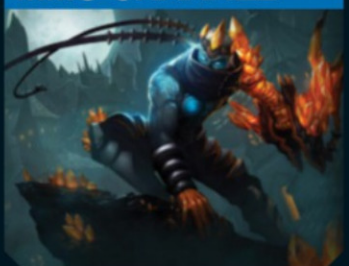
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MULTIPLAYER

GTA V ONLINE

MESSING AROUND IN LOS SANTOS

WE DON'T THINK there has ever been a successful online game launch. As thousands upon thousands of people rush to play as soon as possible, servers inevitably buckle and break under the strain. It's happened time and again, from *World Of Warcraft* to *Final Fantasy XIV*, and by gravy did it happen with *GTA Online*. It's the biggest game in the world, after all – it's gonna be popular.

So, after a few weeks of dropped connections, lost characters and lag all over the place, *GTA Online* seems to have settled down and finally started working properly. So, what's it like?

Short version: it's a lot like *GTA V*, with a few friends involved. Players make a character before jumping back into Los Santos, although the method for doing so is weirdly obtuse. Instead of just setting how you look, you instead determine what your grandparents and parents looked like before determining how much of each parent's looks your character inherited. It's bizarre and a bit irritating, making it difficult to get the look you really want for your character without a lot of work.

Still, once you get into the game you'll probably stop caring. After flying into the city you are met by everyone's least favourite *GTA V* character Lamar, who quickly sets you up with a tutorial race against some other players. Finish that and the world opens out, and the fun really begins.

This isn't an MMO, but it uses some of the same key concepts. Other players populate the world automatically, usually around ten at any time. They show up as white dots on the map, so it's easy to tell where they are at a glance. That's it, really: everyone has their own thing to do, with a large campaign of missions to complete and various other challenges on top. Of course, whether you actually want to do them or rush off and cause trouble for other people is your prerogative entirely.

That's *GTA Online* in a nutshell – a separate *GTA* campaign that happens to take place in a world with other people. There is as much or as little potential for chaos as you (or other people) choose. Here are a few of the many, many things you can do...

RACES

Kind of obvious, but the basic thrill of driving faster than your friends never gets old. Throw in the fact you've all got guns and things take a more chaotic turn...



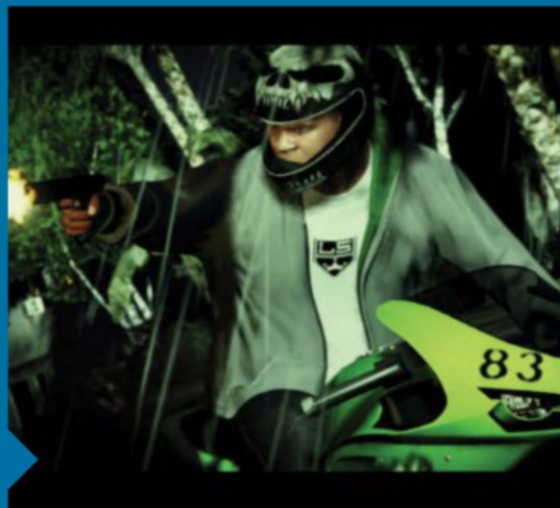
CAMPAIGN

There's an entirely new campaign for *GTA Online*, a prequel to the single-player starring your custom-made character. It's not quite up to the level of the main story, but it's still good fun.



MURDER

You could always just disregard everything else and do your best to make the lives of other players a misery by killing them over and over again. Isn't that what the internet is for?



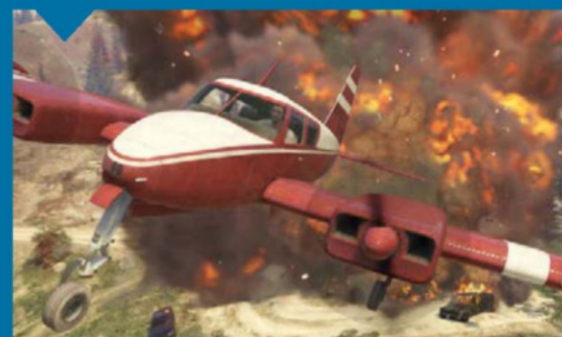
DEATHMATCH

Traditional Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch modes are available, taking place in enclosed maps just like momma used to do it. It's all consensual, of course.



ABSOLUTE MADNESS

Just think of the potential. Airplane chicken? Dirt bike races in the mountains? Shootouts between your crew and hordes of police? Or just a peaceful game of tennis? Up to you.



TROPHY GUIDE

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

By now we'll assume you've seen the credits roll on GTA V. Now it's time for the serious business. We've got the tips to make sure you mop up those remaining single-player Trophies and complete everything that GTA Online has to offer...

GTA V MOP-UP

■ **WE'RE GOING TO** ignore most of the single-player Trophies here since by now you should have at least the majority of the obvious ones. These are just the handful you may have missed on your journey through the game.

ALTRUIST ACOLYTE



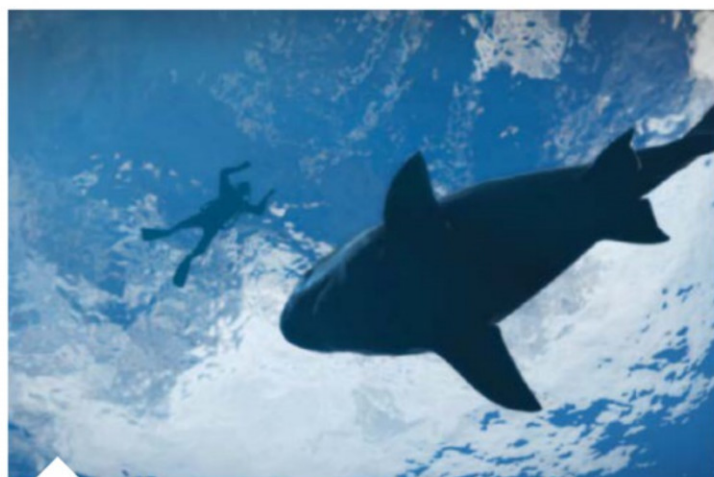
WHEN PLAYING AS Trevor you'll have the option to take a random stranger to a creepy cult. Not all characters can be taken, so look for hitchhikers and the like – mostly found in Blaine County. The prompt will appear when a suitable character can be taken to the cult, so follow that and the Trophy is yours.



KIFFLOM!



THIS ISN'T PARTICULARLY tricky, but it's never mentioned as something you can do. Your objective is to complete a string of Epsilon Program side-missions as Michael, which you initiate by going to www.episilonprogram.com on the in-game internet, completing the survey and paying \$500. A Strangers & Freaks icon will later appear on the map, which will initiate the missions. Follow the various objectives – including paying a lot of fees – and you'll eventually find enlightenment with this Trophy.



OUT OF YOUR DEPTH



UNLESS YOU GOT the reference from the Trophy description you might not know what this Trophy is all about. Just as well it's pretty simple to complete: just grab a boat or jetski (or even swim) out to the darker parts of the sea surrounding the island of San Andreas and you'll find a shark. Let it eat you and this Trophy is yours.

THREE MAN ARMY



THE WORDING OF this one is a little weird, but what it means is to get all three characters together and survive a three star wanted rating together. Luckily there's a fairly easy way to do it: grab a tough car, like a jeep or something, take it to Los Santos Customs and fit it with armour and – if you like – a faster engine. Now call up the other two characters and ask them to hang out, pick them up then head to the airfield. There's cops around here so kill them quickly to get your three star wanted rating then jump in the armoured vehicle and race up and down the runway. Cops will come and get you, but will likely struggle killing you in your armoured jeep – keep their attention for at least three minutes and the Trophy will unlock.



GTA ONLINE

■ **GRAND THEFT AUTO Online** is the multiplayer component to *GTA V* and has just as many Trophies to unlock for this alone. We won't tell you how to unlock the ones about buying certain features, playing every game type or reaching level 100 – they're pretty obvious – so here's how you collect those remaining Trophies. They're all possible to boost with your friends, so if you prefer to do it the easy way then feel free – some will be tough to get otherwise.

DIALLING DIGITS

 **THIS PARTICULAR TROPHY** is pretty easy, but it does mean you'll need to reach at least Rank 20. You'll be contacted by the Merryweather mercenary crew and will be offered support, should you need it. What this means is, at any point, you can call them up to request air support with a Buzzard – it'll cost you \$5,000 but you'll also get this Trophy.



CLEAN SWEEP

 **TECHNICALLY YOU CAN'T** unlock this until level 18 – or, at least, that's when the mechanic is officially introduced – but it can be done beforehand by starting a fight in the appropriate areas. Once it is unlocked you'll find certain areas on the map appear as red circles; this is a Gang Attack. Your objective for this Trophy is to kill at least 10 enemies during this attack and somehow do it without dying. Easier said than done, of course, so bring armour, plenty of guns and – if you have them – friends to help you out.



UNNATURAL SELECTION

 **THIS TROPHY REQUIRES** you to complete the tenth and final wave of one of *GTA Online*'s Survival missions. These are available from Rank 15 onwards, so you'll need to put a decent amount of time in before you can access even the first of these missions. Some missions are easier than others to unlock this Trophy on – 'Boneyard' is a good example – due to the nature of the design and layout of the mission map. Find somewhere you are easily protected, preferably to avoid being attacked from one of your flanks. Keep an eye on the map, too, and if you can get friends to help you then, obviously, this will be a hell of a lot easier.



FULL REFUND

 **ONCE YOU HAVE** over \$5,000 you can be mugged by other players who will steal your money. There's no trick to surviving this – other than being good at the game – but the better your arsenal of weapons is, the better your chances of survival when you try to retrieve your stolen paper.

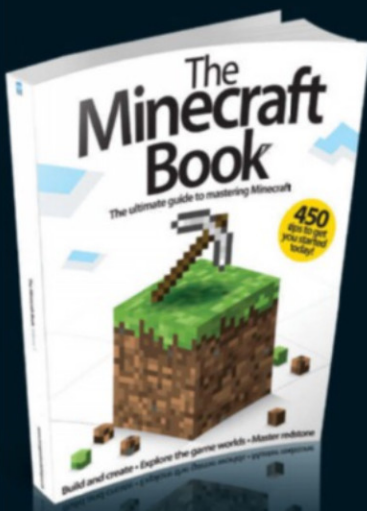


RUN LIKE THE WIND

 **AFTER REACHING RANK 10** in *Grand Theft Auto Online* you'll unlock bounties, a feature that enables both yourself and other players to add a bounty onto anyone in your current play session. This Trophy requires you to survive 24 in-game hours with a bounty on your head and, though it is pretty easy with some help from a friend, it can be tricky when playing with random players. If you get a bounty placed on your head, start running. There is no tried-and-tested solution here: if you trust your mad skills then stick around somewhere defensible. It'll be hard, however, so we'd recommend grabbing a dirt bike and racing off into the wild. If you keep going long and far enough hopefully they'll give up chase, but consider climbing a mountain if only for the neutral ground it presents both yourself and enemy players. For reference, 24 hours in-game will take around half an hour in real life. Good luck – you'll need it.



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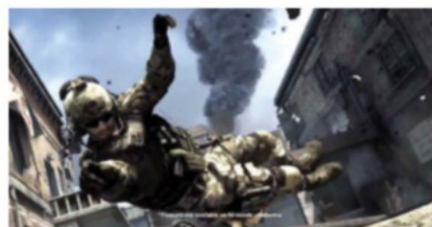
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GRAND THEFT AUTO ONLINE



SCHEDULED STREAMING



In case you've been living in a cave for the last couple of years, *Grand Theft Auto V* is here and it's really quite good.

See us take on the world in the ambitious multiplayer component, *GTA Online* on Twitch – there are a couple of older videos archived for you to enjoy, plus we'll be adding more as we continue to play...



Join us from 1pm GMT every Friday for live broadcasts of the latest PlayStation games, be it the biggest new releases

or the multiplayer titles that everyone is playing. Streams will be backed up for you to enjoy later if you can't join us live, plus there will be plenty more live streaming going on once PlayStation 4 arrives.

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PS4 LAUNCH LINE-UP DISCUSSED

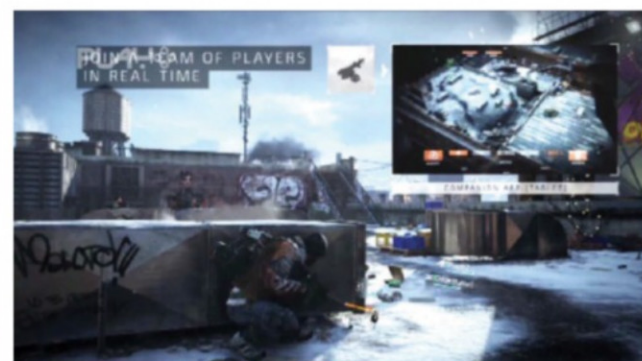


THE PLAY TEAM CHAT about the PS4 launch line-up, The PlayRoom and the technical advances that the new generation will bring.

BIOSHOCK INFINITE – BURIAL AT SEA DLC



THE FIRST PART OF *Infinite's* *Burial At Sea* sends players back to the underwater utopia that is Rapture. Hear what the Play team has to say about it.



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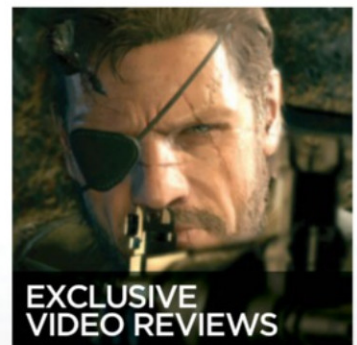
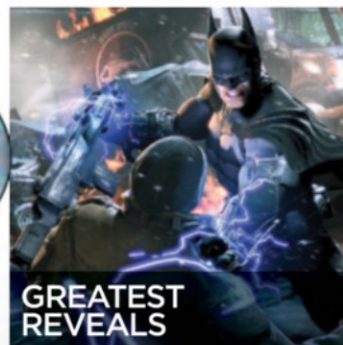
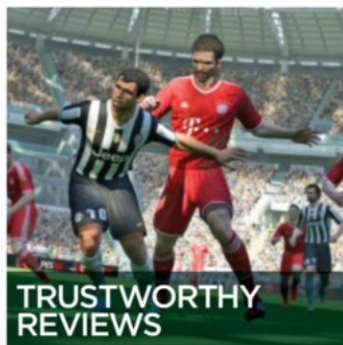


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PLAY+ PLUS Playlist

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS WE'VE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING...



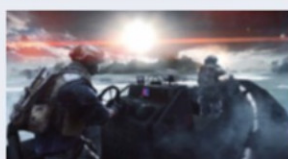
top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Pokémon Y
- 2 Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn
- 3 Hatsune Miku: Project Diva F
- 4 Killzone: Mercenary
- 5 Diablo III



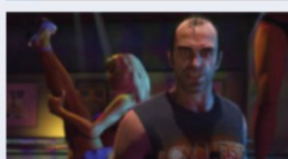
top five EDEN FRANKHAM

- 1 Counter Strike: Global Offensive
- 2 Battlefield 4
- 3 Deus Ex: The Missing Link
- 4 Painkiller: Hell & Damnation
- 5 Mark Of The Ninja



top five STEVE HOLMES

- 1 Battlefield 4
- 2 Batman: Arkham Origins
- 3 Call Of Duty: Ghosts
- 4 Dark Souls
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater HD



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 Grand Theft Auto V
- 2 Pokémon X
- 3 Dragon's Crown
- 4 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker HD
- 5 The King Of Fighters XIII

PS3 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
007 Legends	225	44%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum was a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beowulf	161	61%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
It's so rare to play something and know that it will be considered an all-time great. A wonderful FPS with deep, tactical combat.		
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands 2 is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DIRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Deadpool	233	60%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
DmC Devil May Cry	227	93%
DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Grand Theft Auto V PS3	97%
Beyond: Two Souls PS3	70%
FIFA 14 PS3	90%
Killzone: Mercenary PSV	88%
Puppeteer PS3	70%
Lost Planet 3 PS3	58%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX PS3	80%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, <i>Ascension</i> is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece; the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Grid 2	232	79%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
LA Noire	206	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
 <i>Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance</i> is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.		
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
 <i>Need For Speed: Most Wanted</i> is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	223	74%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
Payday 2	235	79%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%
 Essential for both <i>Persona</i> fans and fighting game enthusiasts, <i>Persona 4 Arena</i> is an absolute joy to play.		
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN FINAL FANTASY GAMES



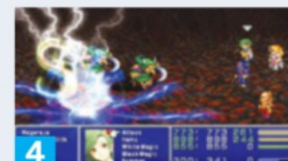
1 Final Fantasy VII



2 Final Fantasy VI



3 Final Fantasy Tactics: The War Of The Lions



4 Final Fantasy IV



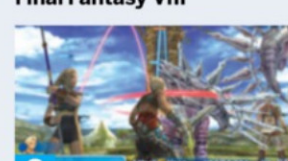
5 Final Fantasy X



6 Final Fantasy IX



7 Final Fantasy VIII



8 Final Fantasy XII

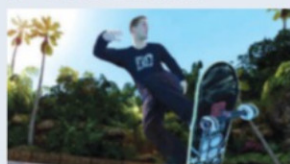


9 Dissidia: Final Fantasy



10 Chocobo Racing

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



MY NAME IS EARL
PLAY: SKATE 3

Skate 3 features Jason Lee, star of various Kevin Smith films as well as sitcom *My Name Is Earl*. Turns out the guy used to be a professional skateboarder (for real!).



CRYING
PLAY: XCOM:
ENEMY UNKNOWN

XCOM will break you. Sure, you might be confident to begin with, but XCOM will slowly erode your will to live until you are left a broken, crumpled heap. Great game.



JOHN WOO MOVIES
PLAY: RESONANCE OF FATE

It's a great JRPG with decent characters, but the star of *Resonance Of Fate* is the insane battle system cribbed from John Woo movies.



MURDERING DEITIES
PLAY: GOD OF WAR III

Few games give the opportunity to utterly butcher your way through a gauntlet of ancient Greek gods and mythological figures.



EXPLOITATION FILMS
PLAY: THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

A lightgun blaster full of Seventies style and humour. The presentation is fantastic, the dialogue is hilarious and the game is pretty darn fun.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
ShellShock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen - we do not say that lightly.		
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
The <i>Walking Dead</i> should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.		
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Lara returns in this excellent reboot, but she doesn't have a very nice time. Her survivalist origin story is grim, daring, and brilliant.		
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE '12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%
Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: XCOM is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.		
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%

PS VITA LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
Persona 4 Golden is one of the best RPGs around, with great characterisation, a gripping story and smart combat mechanics.		
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

GAME

ISSUE

SCORE

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
The Cave	230	77%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Counter-Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Digger HD	186	52%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
Droplitz	184	91%
Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%

GAME

ISSUE

SCORE

Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
fIOW	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	227	71%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Journey	216	87%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Nights Into Dreams...	224	75%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numb!ast	183	60%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Okami HD	225	90%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%



Okami is lovely, just as we remember it, and has been given a treatment that takes it far beyond the muffled visual quality of the PS2 original.

GAME

ISSUE

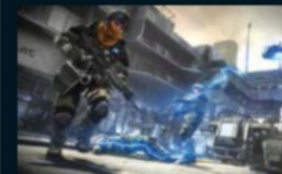
SCORE

Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars Pinball	230	79%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Terraria	232	85%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Under Siege	207	71%
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Episode 1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Here are the games we've been enjoying recently.



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Killzone: Mercenary

WHY (was it chosen?)

It's a perfect fit for Vita and it looks lovely

LUKE ALBIGÉS

BEFORE LAUNCH,

I was as sceptical as anyone else that *Mercenary* wouldn't match either the visual quality of the early screens released or the gameplay quality of the console series. But Guerrilla Cambridge came good on both fronts, creating a stunning shooter somehow misunderstood by many. It's not a short game and multiplayer is superb. And it has a card system, which is on my 'what makes a good game' checklist. Roll on *Shadow Fall*.



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Grand Theft Auto V

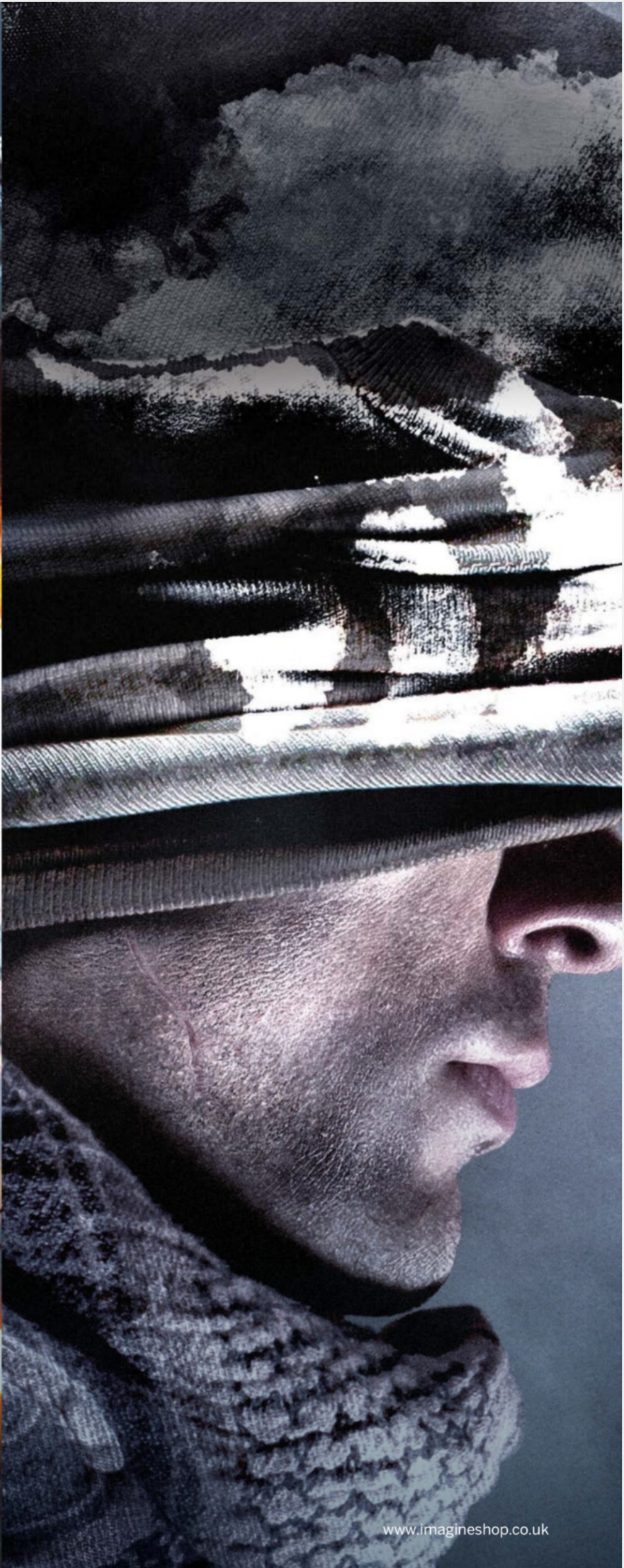
WHY (was it chosen?)

Because it's kind of a big deal

SAM SMITH

NEXT-GEN IS ALMOST

here but, honestly, I wouldn't mind if it waited a while longer. I'm still playing *Grand Theft Auto V* and I'm still loving every minute. There is a reason that a new *GTA* game is such a big deal – few other titles let you dick around to such an extent, and those that do have nowhere near the production value and attention to detail. Story mode is fun and all, but the real joy in *GTA V* is from doing stupid things for the sake of it.



NEXT MONTH IN PLAY ON SALE DEC 5

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PLAY

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.play-mag.co.uk
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Magazine team

Editor In Chief **Nick Roberts**
Deputy Editor **Luke Albigés**
luke.albiges@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586269
Designer **Eden Frankham**
Staff Writer **Sam Smith**
Sub Editor **Stephen Holmes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Publishing **Aaron Asadi**
Head of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors

Adam Barnes, Matt Edwards, Ryan King, Josh West, Richard Wordsworth.

Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Advertising Director Matthew Balch
matthew.balch@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586437

Head of Sales Hang Deretz
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586442

Account Manager Anthony Godsell
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586420

Cover disc

Junior Web Designer Matt Deeble

International

Play is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401

Subscriptions

Head of Subscriptions Gill Lambert
play@servicehelpline.co.uk
☎ UK 0844 848 8404
☎ Overseas +44 1795 592 875

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Circulation

Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Damian Butt **Group Managing Director**
Steven Boyd **Group Finance and Commercial Director**
Mark Kendrick **Group Creative Director**

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